FAMILIAR LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF BIRMINGHAM,

IN

REFUTATION OF SEVERAL CHARGES,

ADVANCED AGAINST

THE DISSENTERS,

BY THE REV. MR. MADAN, RECTOR OF ST. PHILIP's,

IN

HIS SERMON,

ENTITLED,

'The principal Claims of the Diſſenters conſidered.'

Preached at St. Philip's Church, on Sunday, February 14, 1790.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S.

To ſpeak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, ſhewing all meekneſs unto all men. TITUS iii. 2.

MR. MADAN'S TEXT.

Ne ſævi Magne Sacerdos. VIRGIL.

BIRMINGHAM,

PRINTED BY J. THOMPSON;

AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

FAMILIAR LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

Of the ſeditious Tendency aſcribed by Mr. Madan to the late Public Meetings of the Diſſenters.

My generous Townſmen and Neighbours,

HAVING lived very happily near ten years in this part of the country, and being deſirous to acquire, and preſerve, your good opinion, I take the liberty to addreſs you on a ſubject to which your attention has of late been very frequently called, viz. the application to parliament for the repeal of the *Teſt and Corporation Acts*, both from the pulpit and the preſs, eſpecially by the juſtly reſpected rector of St. Philip's, in his late *ſermon*, entitled, *The principal Claims of the Diſſenters conſidered*, in which he has advanced many things tending to give you a very unfavourable opinion of the Diſſenters in general, and, not very obliquely, of myſelf in particular.

Mr. Madan's excellent character will lead you to give him entire credit for whatever he ſhall think proper to declare, eſpecially from ſo ſacred a place as the *pulpit*. For you will naturally conclude, that ſpeaking with ſuch ſolemnity, he muſt have carefully conſidered what he aſſerted; and his ſincerity would not have been called in queſtion, even if he had not thought neceſſary to declare, p. 6, that what he delivered were the *ſettled principles and conviction of his heart, as he hoped for mercy from the God of truth.* This is ſuch a ſolemn form of an oath, or an appeal to God for his ſincerity, as is not very common, and is never uſed except in caſes in which a man ſuppoſes that there may be ſome cauſe to ſuſpect his veracity; and how Mr. Madan

ſhould conceive that this ſhould be *his* caſe I cannot imagine. Recourſe ſhould not be had to ſuch peculiarly ſolemn forms of aſſeveration without *neceſſity*, becauſe it tends to make them too common, by which means they come at length to loſe their effect.

Beſides, I cannot help wiſhing that the preacher had kept up to the ſpirit of his text a little better than he has done. This adviſes us to *ſpeak evil of no man*, *to be gentle*, and *to ſhew meekneſs towards all men*. But how is this conſiſtent with his imputing to a numerous ſect of his fellow citizens (with many of whom he muſt have had, I doubt not, a pleaſing and uſeful intercourſe) ſome of the very worſt and moſt dangerous deſigns, for which he can have no evidence beſides his own ſurmiſes. He calls the late proceedings of the Diſſenters to procure the repeal of the Teſt and Corporation acts, p. 4, *clamorous* and *violent*. He intimates that our *final views* are of a *ſeditious tendency*. What favourable inference, ſays he, p. 27, "can be drawn from the alarm "which their leaders are ſounding through every part of "Great Britain about their *common cauſe*; how are we "to underſtand their voluntary contributions for national "meetings, and for *other public uſes*," directing your particular attention, as you ſee, to the laſt words, as being of a more ſuſpicious nature, by printing them in *italics*.

Certainly, my good friends, the preacher in bringing theſe *railing accuſations*, has quite loſt ſight of his text—This is *ſpeaking evil*. It is not being very *gentle*, or *ſhewing much meekneſs*. But I account for it by his imagination being ſtrangely diſturbed with groundleſs terrors, on account of the intereſt that he and his friends have in the ſyſtem for which he is ſo very apprehenſive; ſo that he *fears where no fear is*, and where no other man, except one in a ſimilar ſituation, can ſee any cauſe of fear at all. But perceiving how much he is agitated on the ſubject, I ſhould not wonder if he ſuſpected an enemy to be concealed in every buſh, or to ſee him ſtart at his own ſhadow.

For do but conſider the thing coolly, and ſee what our proceedings have actually been. Have they not been the very

very ſame that, without any cenſure, have been again and again adopted by the moſt peaceable claſſes of people in the country, manufacturers for inſtance like yourſelves, who have no other wiſh than *quietly to follow their own buſineſs*, whenever they have imagined themſelves to be aggrieved by any particular law, or meaſure of government? Have they not held their *meetings* by public advertiſement? Have there not been ſeveral of them in this very town, many in London, and other places, to conſider of proper meaſures to obtain redreſs, to ſolicit parliament, &c. and when theſe meetings are, as indeed they neceſſarily muſt be, attended with *expence*, muſt not *funds* be eſtabliſhed to defray thoſe expences? Have not theſe things been done a thouſand times in this country, without any body ever imagining that there was any thing *ſeditious*, or *hoſtile to government* in them? Now candour would ſuppoſe that we Diſſenters, like other bodies of men who have held ſimilar public meetings, have had no farther view than to relieve ourſelves from what we conſider as *hardſhips*.

By printing the words *other public uſes* in italics, Mr. Madan certainly meant to inſinuate that, beſides what we *expreſs*, we had ſome farther *concealed* and *dangerous views*; as if there were not many *public uſes* of a very innocent nature, for which *money* was neceſſary, beſides merely defraying the expence of public meetings. You ſee that we print and publiſh many pamphlets, as well as inſert the reſolutions of our meetings in the public papers, in order to give our countrymen the information which we ſee they want concerning our ſituation, and the reaſons for our application to parliament. This buſineſs alſo requires a very extenſive *correſpondenee*, which is neceſſarily attended with expence.

Now, might not Mr. Madan's imagination, if it had not been of a very ſuſpicious turn indeed, have led him to ſuppoſe that by *other public uſes* were meant ſuch expences as *theſe*, and others equally neceſſary, but not deſerving to be particularly ſpecified in a printed reſolution? What a ſtrange ſuſpicious turn muſt that man's mind have, who could

imagine that under ſuch an innocent expreſſion any *dark deſigns* were concealed; as if we were ready to take arms in order to overturn the government. He muſt be a mere Don Quixote who can believe any ſuch thing, and worſe than a Quixote who could inſinuate it without believing it. But as Mr. Madan ſolemnly declares that he ſpeaks from the *ſettled principles and conviction of his heart, as he hopes for mercy from the God of truth*, I am willing to think, that ſtrange as this notion is, and bordering even upon inſanity, it has actually got poſſeſſion of his mind. For can it be ſuppoſed that a miniſter of the goſpel of peace, in the perfect uſe of his reaſon, could, on ſuch a trifling ground as this, endeavour to raiſe your indignation againſt perſons with whom you have lived in good neighbourhood from your infancy, and whom you know to be as well affected to government, and as peaceably diſpoſed, as himſelf.

Whatever the Diſſenters be with reſpect to their *religious principles*, which concern only God and ourſelves, you ſee that we are not abſolutely *mad*; and *that* we muſt be to think of overturning a government ſo well eſtabliſhed as that of this country, even if we were not friends to it. But the Diſſenters have given clearer proofs of their value for it. and eſpecially of their attachment to the reigning family than the generality of the clergy, whoſe loyalty, though they now make ſo great a parade of it, is well known to be of very late date; whereas ours was always zealous and active from the firſt acceſſion of the preſent reigning family, as the moſt authentic documents teſtify.

As to our *public meetings*, which have given ſuch umbrage to Mr. Madan, have not the Quakers always been in the habit of doing the very thing that he conſiders as of ſo ſeditious a tendency in us. Have not they their *diſtrict meetings* every month, and their *national meetings* in London every year; and have they not a common *fund* to defray the expences attending them, and for *other purpoſes* alſo not particularly ſpecified? As to what we do in our *diſtrict*

meetings

meetings (for as yet we have not held any national one) are not our reſolutions made public? You ſee them in all the newſpapers, ſo that you may read, and examine them yourſelves, and ſee whether they contain any thing of a ſeditious nature. It is for your information, and judgment of them, that we are at ſo much expence to make them public. Our wiſh is to give you information, to lay our caſe clearly before you, to invite the accuſations of our adverſaries, and to make you our judges.

Mr. Madan could not write as he has done, without ſuſpecting that, beſides our *printed reſolutions*, we have *others* which we do not publiſh, like the *ſecret articles* in public treaties between ſtates and ſovereigns. But ſo very heterogeneous a body as the Diſſenters are, agreeing in nothing but a deſire of *equal liberty*, could not well have, or keep, ſecrets. Mr. Madan himſelf ſays, p. 27, that "we "betray our final views indiſcreetly." And truly, if we were not honeſt men, we are very indiſcreet indeed. You never heard of rogues and traitors going to work as we do. If they did, they would have very little chance of ſucceeding in ſuch deſigns as Mr. Madan imputes to us.

You have been told in a variety of publications, that I have threatened to blow up the church, if not the ſtate alſo, with *gunpowder*, and Mr. Madan (who, if the church be blown up, muſt take his fate along with it) has inſinuated p. 26, that *I* in particular have dangerous views. Now, my good friends and neighbours, I am not actually a madman. You know too much of me to believe *this*. You ſee me walk about the ſtreets very compoſedly, without moleſting any body, and always behaving civilly to thoſe who behave civilly to me, and therefore I hope you will not think I have any ſuch diabolical intention. In fact, all the gunpowder that I manufacture is contained in ſuch pamphlets as this that you are now reading, and though it may ſerve for wadding to a gun, it can do nothing elſe towards killing birds, or killing men. My gunpowder is

nothing but *arguments*, which can have no force but what you yourſelves ſhall be pleaſed to give them, from your own conviction of the reaſonableneſs of what I lay before you.

Like other people, who think themſelves in the right, I wiſh, no doubt, to bring others to think as I do on all ſubjects of importance. But the pains I take in this way is for *your* own good, and not for *mine*; and though I ſhould be ever ſo much miſtaken, my intention is friendly, and no harm can ariſe from it. If the conduct of your clergy be juſtifiable, and even commendable, as I acknowledge it to be, to endeavour to bring Diſſenters into the church, provided they make uſe of no other means than *arguments*, it cannot be wrong in me to endeavour by other arguments to bring you from it. We equally mean to conduct you to heaven in the way of truth, and the practice of virtue. After all, you hear us both, and judge for yourſelves; and we have no reaſon to expect that you will go one way or the other till you think you have good reaſon for ſo doing. What then is it that your clergy would frighten you with?

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER II.

Proofs from Hiſtory and recent Facts, that neither the Diſſenters in general, nor the Preſbyterians in particular, have been ſuch Enemies to Monarchy as Mr. Madan has repreſented.

My good Friends and Neighbours,

MR. Madan is pleaſed to ſay, p. 13, "Is there no reaſon "to ſee with ſuſpicion their declarations of reverence "to the government, and of loyalty to the king, however "ſpeciouſly and pompouſly announced, when the amount "of that reverence has been exactly aſcertained by a woful "experience of republican tyranny, and the extent of that "loyalty has been exactly delineated with the blood of a "king."

In this extraordinary paragraph, in which, with what views are beſt known to himſelf, Mr. Madan confounds the caſe of the preſent king George III. with that of Charles I. as if they were kings of ſimilar characters, and governed by ſimilar maxims, ſo that whoever could take it into their heads to riſe againſt the one, and dethrone him, would do the ſame by the other if they could; he too plainly inſinuates that all Diſſenters (at leaſt ſuch as met at Leiceſter, whoſe reſolutions he quotes, and which are ſimilar to thoſe that have been adopted in all other meetings, ſo that, in fact, he muſt mean to comprehend the great body of them in his cenſure) are in their hearts haters of *kings in general*, and of the preſent king in particular, that they would certainly murder them all without diſtinction, if they had opportunity; and that all our declarations to the contrary are not to be regarded.

Now, not to ſay that our declarations of reverence for the preſent government, and of loyalty to the preſent king, are no more liable to ſuſpicion than his own declarations, that what he tells you to our prejudice (leading you to conſider

conſider us as a band of traitors and rebels) is from his *ſettled principles and the conviction of his heart, as he hopes for mercy from the God of truth*, (which mercy, if he ſincerely repent, I doubt not he will obtain) let us conſider what *reaſon* he can have for this injurious accuſation of us, as *king-haters*, and *king-murderers*. Let us ſee if we can trace where he got theſe *ſettled principles and convictions of his heart*, though I fear we ſhall not eaſily find it. It muſt be from ſome very obſcure quarter indeed, inacceſſible to all mankind, and of which I ſuſpect he will not be able to give any clear account himſelf. It is certain that the notions he has taken up concerning the death of Charles I. admitting that the preſent Diſſenters, at the diſtance of near a century and a half from the time of that tranſaction, were all the lineal deſcendants of thoſe who put him to death (inheriting their eſtates, names, and characters, and conſidering all kings, and the preſent king, in the ſame light as they did *him)* were not taken from any *hiſtory of England* that is now extant, at leaſt any that I have ever ſeen, or heard of. But when he is called upon, he will perhaps be pleaſed to produce it.

The hiſtory that I ſhould have thought to be moſt to his purpoſe is that of *Clarendon*, of what he calls *the grand rebellion*. But even there he will ſee that the parliament, which began the war with the king, was not a preſbyterian one. It was called, though reluctantly, by the king himſelf, and the members were choſen by the nation at large, and as freely as any members of parliament ever were; and if the neceſſary conſequence of that war was the death of the king (ſince *cauſa cauſæ eſt cauſa cauſati*) they are *Epiſcopalians*, and not *Preſbyterians*, to whom the death of this *bleſſed martyr* may be ultimately aſcribed. But to *what* was he a martyr, but to his own tyranny and duplicity? He would have governed in an arbitrary manner, without any parliament, and actually raiſed taxes by his own authority; and for this it was that an epiſcopalian parliament (for the majority of the members were ſuch) declared war againſt him. And would not ſuch meaſures as theſe juſtify reſiſtance to *any* king? Is there nothing *ſacred* in the *rights of the people*;

people; and are they to be wantonly trampled upon by any perſon, merely becauſe he is called *a king*? And if in ſuch a cauſe a king make war upon his ſubjects, and occaſion the death of thouſands of them, is his ſingle life of ſo much value, as that he ought to be ſpared for ſuch an enormity? But without conſidering the *juſtice* of this meaſure, let us ſee in what manner this tragical event came to paſs, and we ſhall find that, according to all hiſtorians, it is not to be attributed to the *Preſbyterians*, who were by far the majority of thoſe who diſſented from the church of England at that time.

It is ſomewhat remarkable that the parliament which took up arms againſt Charles I. though originally Epiſcopalians, became in general Preſbyterians. But this muſt have been the effect of their own *conviction*, and not of any *compulſion*. Preſbyterians, however, as they were, it is well known that the members of this parliament continued to the laſt well wiſhers to the king, and he was not put to death till by an armed force they were overpowered. This armed force was headed by Independents, and againſt the wiſhes and earneſt remonſtrances of the Preſbyterians, now upon record, they beheaded the king. After that event, the Preſbyterians were the moſt active in bringing in his ſucceſſor Charles II. and without their concurrence he could not have been brought in at all.

Though the *Independents* who killed the king, might be called *Diſſenters* as well as the *Preſbyterians*, who remonſtrated againſt that meaſure, they were but a ſmall minority of them; and therefore, on the ſuppoſition that the preſent race of Diſſenters are deſcended alike from *both*, and we were reſponſible for the conduct of our anceſtors, it ought not to be imputed to us as *a body*, but only to a ſmall *part* of us. Beſides, the Independents of that day did not behead the king from any principles peculiar to their *religious perſuaſion*. Cromwell, and the reſt who joined him in that action, would have cut off the king, whatever had been *their* religion or *his*. They conſulted not their *religion*, but their *ſafety*, and their *ambition*. And in all theſe meaſures the

Independents

Independents were joined by the *deiſts*, and men of no religion at all. It can therefore only anſwer the purpoſes of *faction* and of *bigotry*, and by no means that of *truth*, to accuſe the *Diſſenters* of putting king Charles to death. Had it been conſidered as an action highly *meritorious*, I doubt not, our pretenſions to it would be far enough from being admitted.

If you read any hiſtory of England whatever, you will find this to be the truth of the caſe, though the very reverſe is more than inſinuated by Mr. Madan, and he may have have authorities unknown to all the world beſides. But then he ought not to aſſert what he has done without producing them. Without this he has no right to expect that the *ſettled principles aud conviction of* HIS *heart ſhould become thoſe of yours*.

Mr. Madan, however, having got his hiſtorical and political principles from ſome ſource or other, is pleaſed to aſſert, p. 8, as a general maxim, that "the preſbyterian principles "are unqueſtionably republican." As he calls it *unqueſtionable*, I imagine he has never queſtioned it himſelf, or made any inquiry into the foundation of it; but as you are not bound to adopt his principles without *queſtioning*, or *examination*, let us ſee how they accord both with the hiſtory of *former times*, and the *preſent ſtate of things*, which Mr. Madan, though he may ſhut his own eyes, cannot conceal from you.

At the time of the *civil wars*, or, as Mr. Madan will ſay, during the *grand rebellion*, the Scots were unqueſtionably Preſbyterians, if ever there were any ſuch people in the world. But though they joined the Engliſh till the king was effectually ſubdued, they remonſtrated againſt putting him to death; and when, after this, England was governed by a republic, the Scotch Preſbyterians, whoſe principles Mr. Madan ſays were *unqueſtionably republican*, were ſo attached to *monarchy*, that they not only received Charles II. and made him *their king*, but in order to aſſiſt him in recovering what they deemed to be his *right*, they marched an army into

England,

England, but were defeated at Worceſter, as every perſon who has read the hiſtory of England well knows. Where, then, is the evidence *from hiſtory* of the principles of Preſbyterians being *unqueſtionably republican?* Mr. Madan, however, aſſerts this to be the *ſettled conviction of his heart*, and therefore he muſt either have read ſome *other* hiſtories of England, or none at all.

Let us now ſee whether it appears from the *preſent ſtate* of *things*, that the principles of Preſbyterians be, as Mr. Madan aſſerts, *unqueſtionably republican*; and for this purpoſe let us look towards Scotland, where, whether Mr. Madan be acquainted with the fact or not, it is well known to others, that *preſbyterianiſm* is as much the eſtabliſhed religion of *that* country, as *epiſcopacy* is of *this*. Now, are the Scots at all ſuppoſed to be inclined to republicaniſm, or have they ever been accuſed, even in the greateſt violence of party, of diſaffection to the preſent government, or of any want of attachment to the preſent royal family? On the contrary, the only people diſaffected to government in Scotland, thoſe who joined the pretender in that country were all *Epiſcopalians*, and not a man of them *Preſbyterians*. If Mr. Madan's maxim be true, that *the principles of Preſbyterians are unqueſtionably republican*, no nation of Preſbyterians would ever have had a *king*, except one that was *forced* upon them. But the Scots always had kings, and as much *of their own choice*, as we in England. In all the civil wars, during the time of Mary Queen of Scots, it does not appear that they ever thought of abandoning monarchical government, and erecting a republic. While Mary was a priſoner in England, they made her ſon their king. That king became afterwards king of England, and they have been the deſcendants of this *preſbyterian king*, who have reigned in this epiſcopalian country, from that time to the preſent day.

Let us now conſider a little the conduct of the Scotch lords and commons ſince the union of the two nations. Are they more hoſtile to monarchy, and the meaſures of government, than the Engliſh members of parliament?

The

The contrary is generally ſuppoſed. For though many Engliſh lords and commoners oppoſe the meaſures of government, there is hardly an example of any Scotchman, either lord or commoner, ever doing it. And yet Mr. Madan, ignorant, I ſuppoſe, of all this, will have it that the *principles of Preſbyterians are unqueſtionably republican.*

Mr. Madan will perhaps ſay that he meant the Preſbyterians *in England*, excluſive of thoſe *in Scotland.* But originally they were the very ſame; and till long after the time of Charles I. in which he charges them with maintaining republican principles, there was no difference whatever between them; and whatever Mr. Madan may think, the Engliſh Preſbyterians at this day are no more attached to a republican government than thoſe of former times, or thoſe in Scotland; and I challenge him to produce any evidence of his confident aſſertion. That ſingle ſpeculative men, Preſbyterians or others, may give the preference to that mode of government *in theory*, is not the queſtion. Mr. Hume evidently had a predilection for it, but was he therefore diſcontented with this government, or in the leaſt diſaffected to it? There never was a more obedient ſubject. But the Diſſenters, as a body, have never ſhewn any preference of a republican government; though it is eaſy to aſſert *this*, or any thing elſe, in order to throw an odium on thoſe whom we wiſh to render generally obnoxious.

In fact, Mr. Madan might with as much truth ſay that all Preſbyterians are *Negroes**, and that we paint our

* In the famous conteſted election at Briſtol between the late Lord Nugent (as he afterwards became) and Mr. Beckford, his Lordſhip told me that he gained his point with the populace, by his friends aſſerting that Mr. Beckford (who had an eſtate in Jamaica, and, as I remember, was at that time there) was *a Negro*, and the popular cry on his Lordſhip's ſide was "*no negro, no woollen hair.*" They had even (as I think he added) a painted figure of a negro with ſuch hair carried about the ſtreets. When I aſked him how his friends could aſſert ſuch abſurd falſehoods, he replied that all was fair at an election. Mr. Madan may perhaps think it equally fair in the preſent *conteſt*, to call the Diſſenters republicans, but then he ſhould not have declared that what he aſſerted was from the *ſettled principles and conviction of his heart, as he hoped for mercy from the God of truth.* This was much farther than Lord Nugent went.

faces

faces and hands, in order to conceal it, as maintain that we are *republicans*. Let him, or, ſince *he* will not, do *you*, read my own writings of a political nature, viz. my *Eſſay on the firſt Principles of Government*, or Dr. *Price's Eſſay on Civil Liberty*, which are generally conſidered as the boldeſt, and the moſt exceptionable, of any thing on the ſubject in the Engliſh language; or look into my *Lectures on Hiſtory and General Policy*, in which I particularly conſider all the forms of government, and weigh their advantages and defects, and ſee whether you can diſcover any traces of a preference for republican government. On the contrary, you will there find a decided preference given to our own, and perhaps as good reaſons for this preference as Mr. Madan himſelf is able to give. What then muſt you think of ſuch *calumny* as he, in this random inconſiderate manner, and yet with ſuch uncommon ſolemnity, has thrown out?

The truth is, that we Diſſenters are friends to a *limited monarchy*, in which a king may do much good, and can do but little harm, whereas the clergy in general have always had a leaning to a more *arbitrary form of government*, in which the king ſhall have much to give, and themſelves as much to receive. Hence their deep-rooted attachment to the family of the *Stewarts*, and *ours* to that of *Hanover*. It is well known that the clergy in general were never well affected to what is called *government*, but generally oppoſed the *meaſures of the court*, in the reigns of king William, and thoſe of George I. and George II. while the Diſſenters, out of gratitude for the liberty they enjoyed under them, went perhaps too eagerly with the court, and abetted with too little diſtinction the meaſures of government.

Now, it has unfortunately happened, that *another king is ariſen, who knoweth not Joſeph*, or the obligations that his family are under; a prince who, with the beſt intentions, has the truth hidden from him by churchmen like Mr. Madan, who, without reminding him that the Diſſenters were the ſteadieſt friends of his grandfather, and great grandfather, will perſuade him that they are *his enemies*, and wiſh

to overturn his government; and we have not the ſame acceſs to him as they have, and ſo have no opportunity of informing him better. And though he ſhould give us a hearing, his attention has been pre-occupied by ſuch men as Mr. Madan, who have told him that our declarations are not to be truſted. But, my generous countrymen, we think it our happineſs that we have acceſs to *you*, and perhaps finally, through you, to the king himſelf. Before your tribunal I arraign Mr. Madan, of *evil ſpeaking* and *calumny*; and whether it be *intentional*, or not, the *injury* that we receive from it is the ſame. So far he advances his accuſations as *unqueſtionable axioms*. I demand his *proofs*, and do not wiſh for more impartial judges than yourſelves,

Mr. Madan is a young man, and may not have had leiſure to read much Engliſh hiſtory; but he has *heard* and *ſeen* ſomething; and there is a fact ſo recent, as to be within his memory, which demonſtrates that the Diſſenters in general were as ready as the members of the eſtabliſhed church to expreſs their approbation of the meaſures of the king, when they imagined (whether juſtly or not) that his prerogative was in danger of being trampled upon. This was the memorable period of the *coalition*, when the Diſſenters were particularly forward in their addreſſes to give their ſanction to the meaſures of a court which had always been unfriendly to them. Would they have done this if they had been, *from principle*, hoſtile to the king, and diſpoſed to take a pleaſure in thwarting him?

But what has been the return for this unqueſtionable proof of our loyalty and zeal? Has it ſecured to us the gratitude of the king, or the *miniſter*, whoſe cauſe we eſpouſed? We are ſtill, however, ready, as on many former occaſions, to *do good for evil*, and to ſhew our loyalty on any future occaſion, whenever we ſhall think the juſt prerogative of the king, as well as that of the commons, really violated. We conſider not what others ought to do, but only what becomes ourſelves, as good citizens, and friends to the genuine principles of the conſtitution.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

The Inconcluſiveneſs of Mr. Madan's reaſoning on this Subject demonſtrated from a Variety of Conſiderations.

My good Friends and Neighbours,

ADMITTING that Mr. Madan was right in his ſtrange notion, that they were the *Preſbyterians* who put king Charles to death, and that this was in itſelf the moſt criminal of all tranſactions, a crime never to be expiated by all the public calamities that ever befel a nation; can he be juſtified in charging it upon *us*, or in imputing to us the ſame maxims, at the diſtance of more than four generations, becauſe we bear the ſame *name?* Do not bodies of men, and whole nations, change their principles, in a courſe of years, even much more than individual perſons; and muſt they who are now innocent ſuffer for the ſins of their remoteſt anceſtors? I ſhall mention a few well known facts, to ſhew how unreaſonable ſuch imputations would be.

The moſt turbulent of all religioniſts at the time of the reformation were the *Anabaptiſts* in Germany. But the *Mennonites*, who are much more properly deſcended from them, than the Preſbyterians of this age from thoſe in the time of Charles I. are the moſt peaceable and inoffenſive of mankind. They are perfect Quakers. The clergy of this country do not, in ſeveral reſpects, hold the ſame principles now that their anceſtors did at the time of the reformation. Their doctrines were then calviniſtic, as the thirty-nine articles, and all the writings of that age, abundantly ſhew. But Arminianiſm came in with archbiſhop Laud, and has been prevalent among the clergy to this day. Then alſo they, as well as almoſt all the chriſtian world, were *intolerant*. So late as the reign of king William, the biſhops in a body voted againſt *the act of toleration*, an act from

which they now conſider their church as deriving great merit, ſo that it is the ſubject of their *boaſting*; as you may ſee in Mr. Madan's Sermon, and all the publications of the preſent day againſt the Diſſenters.

Admitting then that, contrary to all evidence of facts, the old Preſbyterians were the perſons principally concerned in the killing, or the murder, of king Charles I. that they were then determined enemies of *all kings*, and that Scotland, occupied chiefly by Preſbyterians, never had a king, it does not follow but that the Preſbyterians of this day, and eſpecially thoſe of England, who have ſeen many good kings (far better, in their opinion at leaſt, than either of the Charles's, or their father James, before them) may not be very well reconciled to kingly government. Allowing all that Mr. Madan has ſaid, notoriouſly falſe as it is, of the old Preſbyterians, it will not follow that we *now*, all of us, carry daggers about us, ready to ſtrike at every king we meet with, or that we are in any ſenſe thoſe dangerous people that Mr. Madan repreſents us. The very terms of *Preſbyterian* and *Independant* have changed their meaning ſince the laſt century; ſo that nothing that may be alleged, though with truth, concerning *them*, can be any juſt ground of accuſation againſt *us*.

If Mr. Madan means that the preſent Preſbyterians, or Independants, are the lineal deſcendants of the old ones, and that the ſame *king killing principles* have been tranſmitted from father to ſon, he will find himſelf ſtill more embarraſſed in his argument. For many perſons, we ſee every day, adopt principles unknown to their anceſtors. My own grandfather was a Churchman, and biſhop Horſley's was a Diſſenter. But do I on that account retain any of the principles of Churchmen, or the biſhop thoſe of Diſſenters. I do not believe that any ſuch thing is ſuſpected of either of us. Our worthy rector of St. Martin's is in the ſame predicament. But who entertains the leaſt doubt of the diſintereſted purity of *his* zeal for the church, or thinks that he ever looks back to the principles of his family? King Charles himſelf,

himſelf, like Biſhop Horſley's father, was the ſon of a Preſbyterian, who for the ſake of *preferment* conformed to the church of England, which is a coincidence of circumſtances not a little remarkable; and I mention it as what may farther recommend my friend the biſhop to the admirers of the royal and beſſed martyr. If the ſons of the biſhop, like thoſe of this king, ſhould become Catholics, the parallel will be ſtill more complete.

It is true that more is required of new converts, as a proof of their ſincerity; on the ſame principles that *miracles* require ſtronger evidence than *ordinary facts*; but the king gave theſe abundant proofs, and the biſhop has done the ſame. But though no perſon, I believe, ever queſtioned the ſincerity of king Charles's attachment to the church of England, notwithſtanding his father had been a Preſbyterian there are ſome ſo unreaſonable as to require more evidence than they have yet ſeen of the biſhop's diſintereſted attachment to it. But then there are perſons whom the evidence of *miracles* will not ſatisfy.

To make Mr. Madan's accuſation at all probable, he ſhould point out ſome *connection* between the principles of Diſſenters, and the *republican* or *king killing principles* that he aſcribes to them. Now, though I have frequently turned the ſubject over in my own mind, I cannot fix upon any religious principles that we are either known, or ſuppoſed, to hold, that could lead him to imagine that we have any predilection for a republican government, or entertain a greater *antipathy to kings* than any other claſſes of men. Beſides, our principles are ſo *various*, and ſome of them ſo directly *oppoſite* to thoſe of others, that if ſome were favourable to republican government, others muſt be as favourable to monarchical.

What juſt now perhaps diſtinguiſhes us the moſt is, that ſome of us are *Trinitarians*, ſome *Arians*, and others *Unitarians*. If Mr. Madan judge by the *majority*, the Trinitarians only muſt be the Republicans, and myſelf and friends,

who are the minority, muſt be good royaliſts. Or, ſince the great body of Diſſenters pray *extempore*, and myſelf and a few more uſe our own pre-compoſed forms (and I have even declared a preference for a liturgy) I ought on this account alſo to be excepted from the charge of republicaniſm, which falls on Diſſenters in general. Moſt diſſenting miniſters pray in a plain black coat. If the republicaniſm lie in *that*, I and a few others, who conform ſo far as to wear a *gown and caſſock* in the pulpit, becauſe we find it convenient (eſpecially as a cover for a ruſty coat, or a tattered pair of breeches) have a third ground of exception from a charge that affects the reſt of the Diſſenters.

But, my good friends, to be ſerious, though it is difficult to be ſo in replying to a charge ſo abſurd and ridiculous as that of Mr. Madan; what have any notions about the trinity, what have modes of prayer, or modes of dreſs, or any thing elſe belonging to Diſſenters, to do with ſyſtems of civil government.

Mr. Madan will, no doubt, ſay that our diſloyalty ariſes from ſome principle that is *common* to *all Diſſenters*, though we differ ever ſo much in other reſpects. Now, we agree in nothing but this, that we equally reject all *human authority in matters of religion*. But ſurely that does not imply that we reject all authority in *civil matters*, ſince the things are in themſelves totally different. It is a maxim with us to *render to God the things that are God's*; but then there is another maxim, the counterpart of this, viz. *to render to Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's*. Our Saviour ſaw no inconſiſtency in theſe maxims, neither do we.

If it be a general ſpirit of diſobedience and revolt that neceſſarily ſeizes all Diſſenters, our wives and children, whom we endeavour to make as good Diſſenters as ourſelves, muſt partake of it; and that would ſhew itſelf in the diſorder of private families, in the diſobedience of wives to their huſbands, children to their parents, and ſervants to their maſters. But if Mr. Madan viſited any families of

Diſſenters,

Diſſenters, he would find them as well regulated as thoſe of the eſtabliſhed church, where the principles of *paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance*, no doubt, keep all in perfect ſubjection to one head.

Now, what becomes of an *hypotheſis*, when there are no *facts* to ſupport it? If there be no conſpiracy of Diſſenters againſt the government, no peculiarly refractory diſpoſition of the wives of the Diſſenters againſt their huſbands, or peculiar obſtinacy in Diſſenters' children towards their parents, what evidence is there of the exiſtence of a *turbulent diſpoſition* in Diſſenters at all? Mr. Madan ſhould attend more than he has done to the connection of *cauſes and effects*, and then he will find himſelf compelled to give up his favourite hypotheſis of the univerſal diſpoſition to *republicaniſm*, and conſequently, as he will ſuppoſe, to *anarchy*, in the principles of the Diſſenters.

It was particularly fortunate for the *Anabaptiſts*, that there were but few of them in England at the time of the civil wars, and that the mention of them does not occur in any civil tranſactions of the times. For as they had been the moſt turbulent of all the ſectaries in Germany, they would certainly have come in for their ſhare of Mr. Madan's cenſure, who would never have been perſuaded but that they had brought their ſeditious principles with them into this country. They now fall under his cenſure (which includes *them* as well as all other Diſſenters) merely becauſe they keep bad company, and go by a bad name. For this reaſon too, the Quakers alſo, and Engliſh Catholics, ought to bear their ſhare of this cenſure, and being divided among ſo many, it will hardly be felt by any individual. This, I flatter myſelf, will be the caſe when, as claſſes of men equally aggrieved by the laws now exiſting, we ſhall all join in one petition for the repeal of all *penal laws in matters of religion*, and, without ſwords in our hands, *demand*, as our natural and juſt right, the civil privileges of other ſubjects.

If the ſins of remote anceſtors are to be imputed to people now living, and Mr. Madan had been a Welſh-

man,

man, he might urge his countrymen to make war upon the Engliſh, for driving them out of their lawful poſſeſſions in the time of Hengiſt and Horſa. Do not then follow Mr. Madan in looking for the guilt of the preſent generation in that of another, one hundred and fifty years ago, but conſider our conduct at preſent, and of this, without having recourſe to hiſtory, you can judge yourſelves, and you will not be miſled by preachers, who by taking advantage of your ignorance, may impoſe upon you.

However, after all that has been urged a thouſand times, and from the cleareſt evidence of hiſtory, to exculpate the preſent Diſſenters from the horrid crime of cutting off king Charles's head, this guilt, like *original ſin*, is ſo entailed upon us, that I believe, it muſt deſcend to our lateſt poſterity, and even to the day of judgment. It is even ready to ſeize all the proſelytes we may make, whether they be the poſterity of Charles himſelf, or of his executioners. The clergy have repeated the accuſation ſo often, and in ſuch ſtrong modes of aſſeveration, as the *ſettled principles and conviction of their hearts*, that they ſeem to believe it as firmly as they do any of the *thirty-nine articles*; ſo that in time it may take its place among them, and make a *fortieth*; though they will then exceed the number of *forty ſtripes ſave one*, which was the limit of caſtigation in the Jewiſh law; and many who muſt ſubſcribe them or ſtarve, I am perſuaded, would rather chuſe that one were taken away, than that any more were added to them. We are the *ſheep*, and our accuſers are the *wolves*, and, ſay what we will, we muſt be guilty. Hoping, however, a more favourable hearing than we have hitherto had, I remain,

My friends and neighbours,

Your very humble ſervant,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

FAIR-HILL,
March 4, 1790.

P. S. My next Letter (which will be publiſhed this day ſe'nnight) will relate to the *Teſt and Corporation Acts*, and I ſhall prove to you that neither the *ſtate*, nor the *church*, have any thing more to fear from the repeal of them than from the repeal of the old ſtatutes concerning witches, or from making any new ones concerning canals or turnpike roads, but that both would be gainers by the meaſure. Nay, I ſhould not wonder, if, when theſe acts are repealed, the clergy ſhould take to themſelves the merit of all that has been done to promote it, as they do with reſpect to the *act of toleration*, after all the oppoſition they made to it.

A

CATALOGUE OF BOOKS,

WRITTEN BY

Dr. PRIESTLEY,

AND PRINTED FOR

J. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER,

No. 72, St. Paul's Church-Yard, London.

LETTERS TO THE REV. EDWARD BURN,

Of St. Mary's Chapel, Birmingham,

In Anſwer to HIS on the Infallibility of the Apoſtolic Teſtimony, concerning the Perſon of Chriſt.

The Conduct to be obſerved by Diſſenters in order to procure the Repeal of the Corporation and Teſt Acts,

Recommended in a Sermon,

Preached before the Congregations of the Old and New Meetings, at Birmingham, Nov. 5, 1789.

AN APPEAL to the ſerious and candid Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, on the following Subjects, viz. 1. The Uſe of Reaſon in Matters of Religion. 2. The Power of Man to do the Will of God. 3. Original Sin. 4. Election and Reprobation. 5. The Divinity of Chriſt; and 6. Atonement for Sin by the Death of Chriſt, a new Edition; to which is added, a conciſe Hiſtory of thoſe Doctrines, 2d. An Edition in a larger Print, price 6d.

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ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS OF BIRMINGHAM,

IN

REFUTATION OF SEVERAL CHARGES,

ADVANCED AGAINST

THE DISSENTERS,

BY THE REV. MR. MADAN, RECTOR OF ST. PHILIP's,

IN

HIS SERMON,

ENTITLED,

'The principal Claims of the Diſſenters conſidered.'

Preached at St. Philip's Church, on Sunday, February 14, 1790.

PART II.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S.

To ſpeak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, ſhewing all meekneſs unto all men. TITUS iii. 2.

MR. MADAN'S TEXT.

Ne ſævi Magne Sacerdos. VIRGIL.

BIRMINGHAM,

PRINTED BY J. THOMPSON;

AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON,

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

FAMILIAR LETTERS, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the Teſt and Corporation Acts.

My generous Townſmen and Neighbours,

THE nature of the *Teſt and Corporation Acts*, which have occaſioned all this writing and preaching, has been ſtrangely miſrepreſented to you, and Mr. Madan's Sermon has no tendency to clear it up. But plain men may judge of *plain things*, at leaſt by their *effects*, without much deep reaſoning on the ſubject. Mr. Madan ſays, p. 12, that "the Diſſenters are under no diſability which can poſſibly "be avoided conſiſtently with our own ſecurity," that is, the ſecurity of the *church*. Now, without conſidering what the Teſt and Corporation Acts are in themſelves, you ſee that, according to Mr. Madan, they are things without which the church cannot be *ſecure*, if it could *exiſt* at all. But, though I am not of your church, and therefore you cannot ſuppoſe that I think it to be the beſt of all poſſible churches, I have a much better opinion of it, in ſome reſpects, than Mr. Madan has, or any of thoſe high church men, who, on this occaſion, are ſuch zealous ſticklers for it. They muſt think it a poor weak, and infirm thing, indeed, of no ſtrength at all, in its own conſtitution, or they would never fancy ſuch ſupports as theſe to be neceſſary to it. I can clearly ſhew them from *hiſtory* and *fact*, that it is much better eſtabliſhed than their fears will allow them to think it is.

If theſe Acts were really neceſſary to the ſecurity of your church, it is plain that it could never have done without them. And I dare ſay that, after reading Mr. Madan's

Sermon, and every thing elſe that has been written by your clergy (men of great courage no doubt, but who are frightened to death on this particular ſubject) you take it for granted that your church never was without theſe Teſt and Corporation Acts, being its neceſſary *body guards*; and leaſt of all that it was without them in its tender *infancy*, when it muſt moſt of all have wanted ſupport. But through all the reigns of Henry VIII. Edward VI. Elizabeth, James I. Charles I. and till the latter end of that of Charles II. in all which time it roſe from nothing to its full ſtrength and glory, there were no ſuch Acts at all. All thoſe princes were allowed to employ whom they thought proper in all buſineſs of a civil nature, and no inconvenience whatever aroſe from it. Nor when the Teſt act was made was any evil dreaded from the *Proteſtant Diſſenters*. Nay they themſelves moſt zealouſly concurred in paſſing it. The danger then was from the *Catholics* only, on account of the next heir to the crown being a Catholic. Afterwards, mere *party ſpirit*, and not any regard to the *ſafety of the ſtate*, gave birth to the *Corporation Act*.

If theſe Acts be really neceſſary in *England*, they muſt be much more ſo in *Ireland*, where the church eſtabliſhment is much weaker than it is here, not more than one in ten of the inhabitants of that country being of it; and yet in this very reign the Teſt Act has been repealed there; and though, according to Mr. Madan, the church muſt neceſſarily have fallen with it, it ſtill exiſts, and there is even leſs danger of its being overturned than before. Becauſe the Diſſenters being conciliated, and put into good humour by the meaſure, they are leſs than ever diſpoſed to be hoſtile to the church. Being, in all civil matters, equally favoured by government with the members of the eſtabliſhed church, and not lying under the reproach of being *unfit to be truſted with power*, though they have not in fact any more power than they had before, they conſider themſelves as in a more reſpectable ſituation, and are diſpoſed to be contented with it; leaving the clergy to manage their own affairs, and enjoy all their

emoluments

emoluments as before. But when men are treated like dogs, they will ſnarl at thoſe who hold the whip over them, whether they receive a blow or not.

You will naturally aſk, how came the church to be ſo liberal to the Diſſenters in Ireland, and ſo hoſtile to them in England. I will explain the whole in a very few words. There was no *liberality* in the caſe. But the Diſſenters in Ireland are much more numerous in proportion to the members of the eſtabliſhment in that country than they are in this; and therefore, notwithſtanding the meaſure muſt have appeared much more *hazardous* (which is the plea for refuſing *us*) the *court*, and of courſe the *clergy*, did not think it *prudent* to refuſe their requeſt. There were no meetings of the clergy on the occaſion, no ſuch ſermons as Mr. Madan's were preached, and lords and commons were, I believe, unanimous in paſſing the bill. But here the court is at preſent againſt us, and the clergy (though the church would not receive a ſhadow of harm from the meaſure, as the experience of Ireland for the laſt eleven years abundantly proves) indulge themſelves in ſhewing their diſlike to us, becauſe they can do it with impunity.

For the ſame reaſons we were twice repulſed when we petitioned to be relieved from the obligation we were moſt unreaſonably laid under to ſubſcribe the greater part of the articles of your church, a church with which we have nothing to do, and from which we receive no emolument. But the court, wiſhing to ſhew ſome favour to the Catholics; and fearing leſt a clamour would be raiſed by the more ſober part of the nation, if ſomething was not done for *us* too, thought proper at length to grant our requeſt; and then nothing more was heard of any oppoſition from the clergy. Such is the policy of a court, and ſuch the operation of the fundamental principle of *paſſive, obedience, and non-reſiſtance* in the clergy, ever true to the terms of their *alliance with the ſtate.*

If theſe Acts were repealed, there would be no viſible change whatever in the aſpect of public affairs, reſpecting

church or ſtate. It would not, in fact, give any additional power to the Diſſenters, nor, if it did, could that power be employed to the injury of the church. It is not *reaſon*, or even *ſelf defence*, or *ſelf intereſt*, that has driven the generality of your clergy to this violence againſt us; but merely *bigotry* and *paſſion*. Many men of the beſt underſtanding among them clearly ſee this, and wonder, as much as I do, at the general infatuation.

Beſides, is it for the credit of the church of England to ſuppoſe it to be naturally weaker, and to ſtand in more need of foreign ſupport, independent of a voluntary attachment to it, as founded in truth, than other eſtabliſhed churches? No other national church (and they are found in almoſt all parts of the chriſtian world) has any ſuch ſecurity as this, or has ever found the want of it. Mr. Madan, indeed, quotes Dean Swift, p. 26, in ſaying that "in Holland none are "admitted into civil offices who do not conform to the "legal worſhip." But Swift*, like the late Dr. Johnſon, debaſed a good natural underſtanding with the loweſt

* The contemptuous manner in which Swift always mentions *Diſſenters*, as if they were not even of the human ſpecies, ſhews the deſpicable narrowneſs of his mind: and yet a paſſage of his writings, in which this is the moſt conſpicuous, is quoted with approbation by Mr. Madan. 'The offer of their abilities,' ſays Mr. Madan, p. 26, 'integrity and 'learning, and all that may be intended by their *quick-ſighted*' (alluding in a ſneer to an expreſſion in one of my publications) "talents for 'the ſervice of the ſtate, will be ſufficiently noticed by a ſhort extract 'from Swift. "Their zeal, ſays he, is commendable, and when em-"ployments go a begging for want of hands, they ſhall be ſure to have "the refuſal; only upon condition that they will not pretend to them "upon maxims which equally include Atheiſts, Jews, Turks, Infidels, "and Heretics, or which is ſtill more dangerous, even Papiſts them-"ſelves." This is the *contempt* of the *contemptible*, which ſhews the writer not worthy to rank with any of the claſſes of men he here enumerates. When I read ſuch ſtuff as this, and find it the language of this day, as much as it was in the time of Sacheverel, I bleſs God that I was born a *free Diſſenter*, not manacled by the chains of ſo debaſing a ſyſtem as that of the church of England, and that I was not educated at Oxford or Cambridge. My education, in this at leaſt unſpeakably more liberal than theirs, has taught me to eſteem *Papiſts*, *Jews*, *Turks*, *Infidels*, *Heretics*, and even *Atheiſts* if they be honeſt men, and the *Church-of-England-man* too who deſpiſes me. It is becauſe he has been no better taught, or, becauſe God has not given him a better underſtanding.

bigotry.

bigotry. He neither knew, nor cared to know, any thing about the Diſſenters, and he paid no regard to truth or decency in his invectives againſt them. What he ſaid of the Dutch Mr. Madan might eaſily know not to be true in fact. For though every burgomaſter, and thoſe who adminiſter juſtice, muſt have ſubſcribed the national confeſſion of faith, no teſt is required of thoſe who ſerve in the army or navy, which are offices of infinitely more power; and in theſe there are inſtances of their employing even Roman Catholics.

It is plain, however, that Mr. Madan was not able to quote any other inſtance of ſuch illiberality as diſgraces this country. Before the late revolution in France a Proteſtant had been at the head of the French army againſt other Proteſtants, and another had been their prime miniſter in civil affairs, without any apprehenſion being entertained by the moſt bigoted of the Catholics for the ſafety of their eſtabliſhed church. Lord North told us that this was one of the *accidental advantages of an arbitrary government*. But this liberal ſyſtem is continued now that that government is become more free than ours. The catholic religion ſtill continues in France, though Proteſtants are admiſſible into all places of truſt or power.

Is there not an eſtabliſhed church in Scotland, as well as in England? and does not that ſubſiſt very well without any Teſt Act, even with the diſadvantage of its king being of another religion? Yet they allow that king to employ whom he pleaſes in all offices of truſt and power in Scotland, without ſhewing any fear for the ſafety of their national religion. It is plain, therefore, that the Scotch clergy, who have never made any complaint or remonſtrance on the ſubject, have far more confidence in the goodneſs and ſtability of their eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment than the Engliſh clergy, who are ſo miſerably and ſo univerſally panic ſtruck, have with reſpect to theirs. You, brave Engliſhmen, muſt be aſhamed of ſuch *cowards*.

But what is this Teſt Act, and what can it do for your church, or for any church? If it cannot be ſupported without

it, I am very ſure that it cannot with it. For it is no more than *a cobweb*, which any fly may break through. In order to qualify for a civil office, it requires that a perſon ſhould receive the communion according to the rites of the church of England. But this is what moſt Diſſenters now do without violating their conſcience at all. You ſee that both Mr. Ruſſell and Mr. Taylor in your own neighbourhood, have done it, and in conſequence hold the office of *juſtice of the peace*. Theſe are men of honour and principle, proper to be truſted with any degree of power. But bad men, againſt whom alone you ought to be upon your guard, even Atheiſts, men of no religion, who laugh at your church, and who will ſupport it no longer than it ſupports them, make no ſcruple at all of conforming to this Teſt. They are ready to kneel at the rails of your chancel whenever they are called upon, and laugh in their ſleeve all the time.

To make this Teſt any thing like a real guard to the church, and exclude from offices of truſt and power, all who are not *bona fide* members of it, you ſhould inſiſt upon their communicating *habitually*, and not only *that*, but on their attending your public worſhip every Lord's-day. Whereas, the fact is, that very few perſons in any conſiderable office attend the ſervice of your church at all, except when the duties of their office abſolutely require it. This Teſt Act, which you now make your ſheet anchor, the main pillar within the church, and the great buttreſs without it, can in fact do nothing for it at all. It only excludes a few ſcrupulouſly conſcientious men, who in general are not much qualified for public buſineſs, and who might be very innocently admitted into any place. We chiefly object to this act becauſe that it is *diſgraceful* to us, though much more ſo to the country which impoſes it.

The exiſtence of this Act is not of a piece with the liberality of the country in other reſpects. For Diſſenters may be peers, or they may ſit in the houſe of Commons. There, you ſay, there is no danger from them, becauſe their number is inconſiderable. But would not that be the very

ſame

ſame with reſpect to any other places of truſt and power. If the obnoxious Acts were repealed, Diſſenters would not be admitted into offices but at the nomination of the crown, and certainly not in ſuch numbers as to make them formidable. For if perſons of all religious perſuaſions were employed alike, in proportion to their numbers, there would always be the ſame over-balance of officers belonging to the eſtabliſhed religion; which would be ſufficient to counteract the attempts of their brother officers of all the different ſects, eſpecially as theſe would, of courſe, be divided among themſelves.

If, for example, there ſhould be an hundred officers in the army or navy belonging to the eſtabliſhed church, and ten, or even twenty, of half a dozen different ſects, what is it that could be apprehended from them? In fact much leſs than now. Becauſe as things now are, all Diſſenters have a *principle of union* among themſelves, in their common excluſion from civil offices, which would not then exiſt. All would rather he diſpoſed to pay their court to the chief magiſtrate, who had the power of giving to each particular perſon what he wiſhed to obtain, which would naturally give him a bias in favour of his religion, viz. that of the ſtate. Conſequently, the preſent ſyſtem is as *impolitic*, as it is *unjuſt*, if the *ſafety of the church* be the object; and on this principle ſome Diſſenters prefer their preſent ſituation. Admiſſion to civil offices at the nomination of the court would, as they ſay, diſpoſe men to favour the court, and to become leſs zealous as Diſſenters; and the clergy themſelves, if they were not blinded by their rage againſt the Diſſenters, might ſee this. But in this and in many other reſpects, their conduct favours of a kind of *infatuation*, ſuch as generally precedes *ruin*. If you, who are tradeſmen, ſhould act with no more judgment in the conduct of *your* affairs, than they do with reſpect to *theirs*, you would ſoon become bankrupts.

Mr. Madan ſays, p. 17, that "the legiſlature has endeavoured to provide for the ſecurity of the ſtate by thoſe

"means

" means which ought to be effectual with every man, as the " ſtrongeſt and moſt awful which can poſſibly be uſed." But certainly this is ſaying a great deal too much. I have ſhewn you very plainly how it might have been made much ſtronger; and if what I have above propoſed ſhould not be thought ſufficient, let every civil officer be made to ſwear *allegiance to the church of England.* Make them vow perpetual enmity to all Diſſenters, and hoſtility even to the prince upon the throne if he ſhould ever be hoſtile to the church, or be diſcovered to look with the leaſt degree of complacency upon a ſingle Diſſenter. This method would be much more effectual, and certainly more *decent*, than the proſtitution of a ſacred ordinance of religion to ſo prophane and foreign a purpoſe as the qualification for a civil office.

An *oath* expreſsly declares the purpoſe for which it is adminiſtered. A man is thereby made to profeſs ſome ſpecific thing, which it may be proper for the government that he ſhould profeſs, in order that, if he was found to violate his oath, he might be ſubject to a certain penalty. But the mere act of receiving the Lord's-ſupper, without any declaration annexed to it, expreſſive of the purpoſe for which it is received, implies no civil obligation at all. The communicant may conſider the action in his own light, and many will do it as a token of chriſtian fellowſhip with other chriſtians of a different communion. On this idea the famous Mr. Baxter, though a ſteady Diſſenter (having refuſed a biſhopric that was offered him) choſe to communicate once a year with the church of England; and other Diſſenters have voluntarily done the ſame; not as members of the church of England themſelves, but to ſhew their brotherly reſpect for it.

If the ſenſe of the legiſlature may be admitted in the interpretation of any law, a Diſſenter may have leſs ſcruple in communicating with the church of England in order to his admiſſion into any civil office, becauſe it is well known that the law was not meant to exclude Diſſenters, but only Catholics.

According,

According, therefore, to the manner in which the Lord's ſupper is required to be received by candidates for civil offices, it is no ſecurity at all to the church of England; but an horrible prophanation of one of her ſacred rites, and ſuch as muſt be the occaſion of much ſcandal to the truly pious members of your church. If a man perform any *religious act*, whatever it be, he ſhould be left to his own liberty to perform it when he finds himſelf in a proper diſpoſition for it. But in this caſe, whether a man think himſelf qualified or unqualified, whether he be diſpoſed or indiſpoſed to the religious exerciſe, the ceremony muſt be performed. What pain then muſt this give to ſerious clergymen, who are directed by the canons of the church not to give the communion to perſons whom they deem to be *unworthy*, and yet are compellable by act of parliament to adminiſter it, without diſtinction, to all who are appointed to public offices?

Now, though I differ from you who are of the church of England with reſpect to ſome of your *tenets*, and the form of your *church government*, I truſt we feel alike for the honour of what is common to us as *chriſtians*; and this you muſt confeſs is diſgraced by the ſtatutes which we petition to have repealed. They are ſuch ſtatutes as unbelievers would have made, in order to turn your ſacraments, and your religion, into ridicule. If therefore you really wiſh to exclude us Diſſenters from all civil offices, do it *effectually*, but in a more decent and proper manner, ſuch as will ſhew that it is your *religion* that you value, and that you wiſh to guard by this proviſion. But if you find, as you muſt have done already, that no inconvenience has in fact ariſen from Diſſenters (among whom are to be reckoned Scotchmen, who, though Preſbyterians, muſt take the Teſt as well as we) being in civil offices, and there are as many of them in ſuch offices now as there would be if the Teſt was aboliſhed, throw it aſide at once, as a thing that is equally *diſgraceful* and *uſeleſs*, and provide no ſubſtitute for it at all.

How

How weak then, you ſee, is this *barrier* which Mr. Madan ſays, p. 23, "the wiſdom of a former age has "erected for its defence," viz. that of your church, "and "which the experience of a century has proved to be effec- "tual." I think, however, that I have abundantly ſhewn that this is aſcribing a great deal too much to this boaſted ſtatute, whereas it is only like a fly upon the chariot wheel, ſaying *what a duſt I raiſe*. If the experience of a century has proved this barrier to be effectual, the experience of two preceding centuries, and alſo *that* of Ireland at preſent, proves it to be perfectly inſignificant.

I would farther obſerve that this buſineſs would be better conducted if Diſſenters as ſuch, were abſolutely prohibited from being admitted into civil offices; ſo that their nomination and election ſhould be null and void, and not permit them, as is the caſe at preſent in corporate towns, to have a regular nomination to an office, and to allow the validity of their acts while they are in it, and then ſubject them to a dreadful penalty, ſuch as nothing but the greateſt of crimes can juſtify, for having accepted it. For the penalty is the payment of five hundred pounds, being diſabled from ſuing or proſecuting in any court of law, being guardians of any child, being executors or adminiſtrators of any perſon, and being incapable of receiving any legacy or deed of gift. There is nothing in the civil policy of any other country ſo *cruel*, and at the ſame time ſo *inſidious* as this; and yet at Nottingham ſome of the very perſons who joined in the election of a Diſſenter for their Mayor, are actually exacting this heavy puniſhment for his acceptance of it. This is in a country the laws of which, and eſpecially its *criminal law*, is ſo much the boaſt of its inhabitants! However, great numbers of the members of your church are juſt now in the ſame ſituation, ſo that, if the Diſſenters were ſo diſpoſed, they might take ample revenge. For if the proſecution be begun before the *act of indemnity* (which from the general neglect of complying with the Teſt is always found neceſſary every ſeſſions

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of parliament) be paſſed, the law muſt have its courſe. But I hope no Diſſenters in any part of the kingdom will follow the example of the churchmen at Nottingham: I truſt we are better chriſtians.

Since I wrote all the preceding part of this letter your clergy (for it has been their meaſure and not yours, and in the purſuit of it they have conſulted their enmity to the Diſſenters rather than either their own reaſon, or your intereſt) have gained their point. After a full diſcuſſion of the queſtion before the houſe of Commons a great majority appeared againſt the repeal. The clergy have had their triumph, and, no doubt, exult in our defeat; nor do we envy them. For we are not in the leaſt diſcouraged. We know mankind too will to expect that, impoſed upon as they have been ſo long, they will hear the plaineſt reaſons the firſt, or the ſecond time that they are preſented to them. Aſſure yourſelves that they will be preſented again and again, a fourth, a fifth; and if neceſſary, a fiftieth time. We ſhall give abundant exerciſe for the talent your clergy appear to have for invective, and many more inflammatory ſermons, ſuch as Mr. Madan's, will be preached and publiſhed. We alſo, while we are able to ſpeak, ſhall *preach*, and while the preſs is open to us, we ſhall not fail to *write*, in our own defence; and after a few years more the nation at large muſt be ſtupid indeed, if they do not perfectly underſtand the ſubject. And as as we are more than ever fully confident that *reaſon*, *juſtice*, and *ſound policy* are clearly on our ſide, we have no doubt but that the final deciſion will be in our favour. We ſhall even aſk more than we have hitherto done, and ſhall not be refuſed.

When we conſider how many more friends we have now, that all the influence of a popular king, and all the arts of an inſidious miniſter are againſt us (no ſtone having been left unturned to defeat our application) than we had in the two laſt reigns, when the court was uniformly in our favour, we are convinced that liberal ſentiments, favourable to our juſt claims, have gained much ground; and we are confident,

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from the encreaſing liberality of the age (the progreſs of which all the clergymen in England can no more put a ſtop to, than they can prevent the ſun, after he is riſen, from riſing to his meridian altitude) will gain ground more and more. As to the *clergy*, we make ourſelves perfectly eaſy about them. For ſhould the *court* once more ſmile upon us (and courts you know are changeable things) ſhould the miniſter of the day only give a ſingle nod, their oppoſition will vaniſh as by a charm. It will be like throwing a few drops of Dr. Franklin's oil upon the waves, which will make their troubled waters as ſmooth as a looking glaſs. Mr. Madan may preach again from the ſame text *to ſpeak evil of no man, and to be gentle towards all men*; but it will be a very different ſermon from that which is now before you, and much more agreeable to the ſpirit of the apoſtle. The biſhops of this reign would, in ſuch a caſe, inſtantly become as liberal as thoſe in the laſt; and as to the inferior clergy, they would wheel about as quickly as ſoldiers on a parade when the word of command was given in the preſence of the king in St. James's park. Indeed, to be conſiſtent with themſeves, they muſt *obey the higher powers* whatever they are. For the *powers that be are ordained of God*, and therefore *to reſiſt the power*, as Mr. Madan has been careful to remind you, is *to reſiſt the ordinance of God.*

Should the king, like Ahaſuerus in the book of Eſther, vi. 1. *not be able to ſleep*, and call upon one of the lords of his bedchamber *to read to him out of the book of the records of the chronicles* of the kings of England, and ſhould there find who had been the moſt zealous for the revolution under king William, for the acceſſion of the Houſe of Hanover, and for the ſuppreſſion of the rebellions in 1715 and 1745, and who took his part even in a late change of adminiſtration, and then inquire *what honour and dignity* (ch. vi. 6.) had been done to his friends, and the friends of his family, and learn that inſtead of any thing been done to *reward*, much had been done to *mortify* and *puniſh* them, that to this very day they had been perſecuted by lies and calumnies, as *men*

whoſe

whoſe laws were diverſe from thoſe of all other people, and who do not keep the king's laws, and therefore ſay, *that it is not for the king's profit to ſuffer them*, (ch. iii. 8.) poor deſpiſed Mordecai may be advanced, and ſome other uſe be made of the gallows that was erected for him.

In the mean time, we Diſſenters are perfectly ſatisfied with the uprightneſs of our views, and the juſtneſs of our cauſe, and ſhall patiently wait till the nation ſhall coolly reconſider the queſtion, unleſs the clergy riſing as (if they receive no check from above) they naturally will, in their violence againſt us, ſhould, in order the better to ſecure the intereſt of their church, procure a law to *baniſh* (for they will hardly now think of *burning)* us all; and then, as ſome of them are now known to boaſt that they have no Diſſenters in their pariſhes, they may join in one general *Te Deum*, that there are none in the nation: and that we are all driven to France or America, where they ſuppoſe we ſhall meet with ſpirits congenial to our own. If, in conſequence of this, as theDiſſenters have always been an induſtrious people, another Birmingham and another Mancheſter ſhould be eſtabliſhed there, they will only rejoice the more, that all the taxes, and all the tithes, then perhaps doubled, will be paid chearfully by the *genuine ſons of the church*, and that their pockets will be no more contaminated with the fees of Diſſenters. Then will *church and ſtate* congratulate each other, and be as ſociable and happy as the *two kings of Brentford*, dreading no *gunpowder*, real or metaphorical.

With reſpect to your intereſt as a trading nation, and the ſeveral *articles of your manufacture*, what are they compared to the *articles of religion?* Any one of the thirty-nine is of more value than an hundred of thoſe in your invoices. The *church* is even before the *king*, and the king, no doubt, before his *ſubjects*. Let the church therefore, that is, the clergy, be by all means gratified in the firſt place, the king in the next, and you, the people, keeping your proper order in the laſt.

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The zeal of your clergy for the church may beſt be eſtimated by the *ſacrifices* they make to it; and I can ſhew you that, in order to prevent the repeal of the Teſt and Corporation Acts, which they conſider as neceſſary to the ſecurity of the church, they have ſacrificed a thing of far more value to them than their temporal intereſt. For they have thought the cauſe ſo good, that it deſerved to be promoted at the expence even of *truth*. You will alſo ſee, by the account which I ſhall give you of their conduct, that mere zeal for the church is not the whole of their merit. They have ſhewn great *ability* in the management of their affairs, and are as fit for miniſters of ſtate, as for the ſervice of the church.

Thinking it of ſome conſequence to their purpoſe, that ſome Diſſenters, whoſe names are known to the public (ſo that it might be imagined that their ſentiments would be thoſe of ſome conſiderable number at leaſt of the body to which they belonged) ſhould be repreſented as factious men, and enemies to government in church and ſtate, they ſent, too late to be diſcovered and counteracted, to every member of parliament, and to all the biſhops a *printed paper* (a copy of which I have in my hands) containing *Extracts from the preface to my Letters to Mr. Burn*, ſo diſpoſed, and mutilated, as to give a very unfair view of my real principles and conduct; and of this paper a moſt important uſe was made by Mr. Burke in the courſe of the debate, raiſing the indignation of the houſe againſt me, and the Diſſenters in general, as being ſuppoſed to avow ſentiments equally violent with myſelf.

I ſhall give the following paragraph as a ſpecimen of the whole, that you may judge of their proceedings yourſelves. That which is printed in the *Roman* character is their extract, but they omitted what immediately follows in *italics*, becauſe you will ſee that it was not calculated to anſwer their purpoſe.

" Whether I be more pleaſed, or diſpleaſed, with their " preſent violence let them now judge. The greater their " violence,

" violence, the greater is our confidence of final ſucceſs. " *Becauſe it will excite more public diſcuſſion, which is all that* " *is neceſſary for our purpoſe.* Preface, p. 15.

Without the latter clauſe of this paragraph, which they artfully kept out of ſight, it was natural to conclude, as the Houſe no doubt did, that to the violence of the clergy, I was ready to oppoſe ſtill greater violence, and not ſo inoffenſive a thing as mere *argument*.

That my mode of promoting reformation, and of procuring redreſs of grievances, is of the moſt pacific nature, you may ſee in the following paragraph, which is part of a Note (p. 12) in the ſame Preface, but which you will not wonder that they omitted to quote, becauſe it would no more have anſwered their purpoſe, than the laſt clauſe of the preceding paragraph.

" It has always been my opinion that Diſſenters ſhould " not accept of any civil offices for which the majority of " their countrymen have pronounced them diſqualified, but " patiently acquieſce in their excluſion from them, till it " ſhall pleaſe God, in the courſe of his providence, and by " means of our peaceable repreſentations and remonſtrances, " to open the eyes, and enlarge the minds, of our country- " men, and thereby give them more juſt ideas of the natural " rights of men, and of the true intereſt of their country.

This *printed Paper*, thus artfully managed, ſerved Mr. Burke as a text, from which he declaimed, in his eloquent manner, againſt myſelf, and all the Diſſenters, juſt as Mr. Madan has done in his *Sermon*, with this difference, that Mr. Burke was *impoſed upon*, and ſuſpecting no fraud, kept to the *text* that was given him; whereas Mr. Madan ſoon loſt ſight of *his*. But what will Mr. Burke, and the reſt of the honourable houſe of Commons ſay, when they find how they have been taken in?

Mr. Burke is a perſon with whom I have been well acquainted more than twenty years, and till this affair, he always profeſſed much reſpect for me, as I had for him. The laſt time he came through Birmingham, he called at my

houſe, and drank a diſh of tea with me, and we had much free and confidential converſation. But how ſhall we meet after this? He will blame his want of ſagacity, in being *over-reached*; but he will ſay, "how could I expect any deceit "from ſo holy a quarter." Now my friends, you need not be told that they who could do *this*, or knowingly permit others to do it, would do *any thing* whatever to gain the ſame point. They muſt have had an *intent to deceive*, and this it is that conſtitutes the criminality of any wilful violation of truth.

How great then muſt be the value that your clergy (for the ſuſpicion will naturally fall on ſome of this body) have for the cauſe of the church, when they riſque even their own ſalvation for the ſake of it? The conduct of the apoſtles themſelves was never ſo diſintereſted as this. But, like the immortal Curtius, they conſidered that, if they did not leap into the gulph, the church itſelf, and all you who belong to it, muſt have been ſwallowed up. Now had there been any *purgatory* in your church, this conduct would not have been ſo meritorious. For out of purgatory there is redemption, but none from that place to which *whoſoever loveth and maketh a lie* (Rev. xxii. 15.) muſt go. But this being a place only mentioned in ſermons, and by polite preachers not even there, I muſt refer you to your Bibles, if you wiſh to know any thing more about it. It is poſſible, however, that as thoſe of the clergy who diſtinguiſh themſelves the moſt by their oppoſition to Diſſenters approach a little to the church of Rome, they may think to ſave themſelves by *confeſſing* and *abſolving* one another; and as life is always uncertain, if they be as wiſe in the affairs of the *next* world as they are in thoſe of *this*, the ceremony is by this time probably over, and their conſciences entirely at reſt. Think not, however, that they would recommend ſuch conduct to *you*, and thereby riſque *your ſalvation*; ſince it is only for the ſake of the church, in which your ſalvation, *your lives and ſafeties all*, are embarked, that they who are *a few*, chuſe to run this riſque for you who are *many*.

When

When the miſchief is done, the proverb ſays *we may as well laugh as cry*, becauſe both are equally unavailing, and the former is more pleaſant, as well as more conducive to health. I hope, therefore, you will excuſe me, though I have not been quite ſerious on a very ſerious ſubject. Indeed, as a ſerious one, it concerns your clergy and yourſelves, much more than it does me. I ſhall, however, conclude this letter with perfect ſerioufneſs.

The temper which your clergy have ſhewn in preaching, without any provocation whatever, ſo long, and ſo violently, againſt the Diſſenters, and the meaſures they have taken to oppoſe us, ſome of them, you ſee, the moſt artful, and wicked, give us real concern; and we have the leſs hope of any return of liberality in our favour, from ſeeing ſuch men as Mr. Madan joining the party of the bigots, and retailing with apparent glee the low and malignant ſcurrility of Swift againſt the Diſſenters of his day.

As to Mr. Burn's being willing to have *a gird at me*, as Falſtaff ſays, it may eaſily be accounted for. He has a laudable view to riſe in his profeſſion; and being a man of good natural underſtanding, and good elocution, but having had no advantage of education, or family connexions, he may think it neceſſary to do ſomething in order to make himſelf conſpicuous. And he might ſuppoſe he could not do better than follow the ſure footſteps of thoſe who had ſucceeded in the ſame chace before him. This might appear the more neceſſary in his caſe, as, having been a preacher among the Methodiſts and Diſſenters, (which, as I am well known highly to reſpect the Methodiſts, little as they reſpect me, and I am a diſſenting miniſter myſelf, I cannot mention with any contempt) his attachment to the eſtabliſhed church might, without doing ſomething of this nature, have been liable to be queſtioned.

But Mr. Madan is in very different circumſtances. He is a gentleman born. His family and connections are reſpectable; he has had the moſt liberal education that his country can give. He is a man of a natural good temper,

of

of poliſhed and engaging manners, and the door of preferment is ſo open to him, that he hardly needs to knock in order to enter. For ſuch a man as he, without any provocation, to deal out ſuch groſs abuſe, and with ſuch uncommon ſolemnity, ſhews what we have to expect from *the times*. If ſuch men as Mr. Madan can diveſt themſelves of all liberality of ſentiment, and treat as *rebels*, and *hypocrites*, men with whom they have frequent intercourſe, and whom they ought to know better, and conſequently to reſpect, we ſee that, *as things are now ſituated*, there is no hope left. If not from ſuch men as *he*, from whom are we to expect decent treatment? It is a proof that the ſtandard is raiſed againſt us, and that all the clergy, and other friends of the court, whether naturally diſpoſed to it or not, muſt join their ranks, in oppoſing us.

And what is it that they are purſuing? It is a mere ſhadow, an unreſiſting ſubſtance. We have neither the power, nor the will, to make any oppoſition, except in a field in which they cannot meet us, the open field of *reaſon and argument*. Out of this we can never be forced; and as to this, or any particular country, we are *citizens of the world*, and *if we be perſecuted in one place*, we muſt endeavour, as our Saviour recommends, to *flee to another*. Hoping, however, to be permitted to ſtay a while longer in a ſituation ſo perfectly agreeable to me in other reſpects, and not having very long to continue in any, I am,

My good friends and neighbours,

Your well-wiſher,

And humble ſervant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

FAIR-HILL,
March 11, 1790.

P. S. The ſubject of my next Letter (to be publiſhed on Thurſday the 25th inſt.) will be *Toleration*, which being a thing that Mr. Madan has no want of himſelf, I ſhall ſhew you he has thought little about, and certainly does not underſtand.

FAMILIAR LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS OF BIRMINGHAM,

IN

REFUTATION OF SEVERAL CHARGES,

ADVANCED AGAINST

THE DISSENTERS,

BY THE REV. MR. MADAN, RECTOR OF ST. PHILIP's,

IN

HIS SERMON,

ENTITLED,

'The principal Claims of the Diſſenters conſidered.'

Preached at St. Philip's Church, on Sunday, February 14, 1790.

PART III.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S.

To ſpeak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, ſhewing all meekneſs unto all men. TITUS iii. 2.

MR. MADAN'S TEXT.

Ne ſævi Magne Sacerdos. VIRGIL.

BIRMINGHAM,

PRINTED BY J. THOMPSON;

AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

FAMILIAR LETTERS, &c.

LETTER V.

Of a Complete Toleration.

My Friends and Countrymen,

MR. Madan, like other writers on the ſame ſide of the queſtion, willing to repreſent *the church* to which he belongs in the beſt light that he can (and *Toleration* being fortunately at this time a reputable thing) gives it the praiſe of *tolerant*. Now this we Diſſenters readily and thankfully acknowledge *to a certain degree*. The act of toleration, paſſed in the time of king William, which reſcued the Diſſenters from ſtarving or rotting in dungeons, and which, under certain, though hard, reſtrictions, allowed them to worſhip God in the forms they moſt approved, was a valuable thing. But for this we do not conſider ourſelves as at all indebted to *the church*, though the biſhops might not vote againſt it. It was the liberality of *the ſtate*, in ſpite of the *church*. The ſame was the caſe with reſpect to the laſt boon that we obtained. For it was not till after two repulſes, in which the biſhops, as uſual, voted on the *intolerant* ſide of the queſtion, that we got excuſed from ſubſcribing many of the articles of the church of England, by which we had been bound before. But ſtill it is well known that another act of parliament remains in force, which makes it eventually confiſcation of goods and impriſonment for life for any man, educated a chriſtian, to declare his diſbelief of the doctrine of the trinity.

Now, as many of us Diſſenters do ſeriouſly diſbelieve this doctrine of the *trinity*, and even think it our duty to endeavour to bring others to believe as we do, viz. in the doctrine of the *divine unity*, as oppoſed to that of the *trinity*,

it is evident that, while this law ſubſiſts, there is no proper *toleration* in this country for *us*. And yet Mr. Madan, knowing this, and expreſsly mentioning it, can inſult us, as others of the clergy are perpetually doing, by ſaying, p. 12, that we have "the fulleſt liberty of conſcience and "opinion." "This doctrine," (viz. the trinity) ſays he, p. 19, "the Diſſenters think proper to reject, and they "are at liberty to reject it," that is at the riſque of the penalty above mentioned, which if any perſon ſhould be bigot enough to inform againſt us, neither Mr. Madan nor any other clergyman, let his diſpoſition towards us be ever ſo friendly, can prevent being exacted to the uttermoſt. This certainly is no *toleration*. It is mere *connivance*, and ſuch as any felon may enjoy while nobody thinks proper to proſecute him.

Mr. Madan himſelf ſays, p. 21, "I will admit that the "rigorous execution of this law would certainly be in-"tolerant." Is it not then plain, that though Engliſhmen may be merciful, the *laws* are unmerciful, and therefore ought to be repealed. You will naturally think that after Mr. Madan himſelf had taxed the law with intolerance, *if carried into execution* (which is certainly ſaying nothing at all in favour of the *law)* he would be for the repeal of it; but this by no means follows. Without calling this law any guard of the church, or of the principles of it, which however it was intended to be, and even making a merit of its not being executed, he ſays, p. 21, "the deliberate repeal "of it would certainly operate as a virtual ſanction for that "conduct which it was enacted to reſtrain." That is, if there had been any law which made it death to ſteal an apple, it ought not to be repealed, becauſe that would be a virtual ſanction to the ſtealing of apples. Is not this moſt curious reaſoning? Your clergy, I hope, give you better from the pulpit than in ſuch publications as theſe. If the *reaſoning* of Paul (Acts xxiv. 25.) had been no better than *this*, Felix would have been more diſpoſed to *laugh*, than to *tremble*.

It is, indeed, ſomething extraordinary that Mr. Madan's ingenuity ſhould not be able to find ſome *medium* in this caſe,

caſe, either by proportioning the puniſhment to the crime, or by repealing a law, which, however well intended, is found to be of no uſe, and which they are aſhamed to execute. Is it not poſſible to abrogate what is acknowledged to be wrong, without authorizing another wrong? What a poor legiſlator would Mr. Madan be? You muſt certainly ſee, though Mr. Madan cannot, that the repeal of the law of king William, by which we are now forbidden, under the penalty of confiſcation of goods and impriſonment for life, to declare our diſbelief of the doctrine of the trinity, would only give us the liberty of avowing our principles, and would by no means imply an approbation of them. Will Mr. Madan ſay that the act of toleration implied any approbation of the principles of Diſſenters? If ſo, he himſelf muſt approve of them. On the contrary, the legiſlature would by this generous conduct expreſs their confidence in the ſolid *reaſons* on which the eſtabliſhed faith was founded. It would be ſaying, "We have no occaſion to enforce our principles by *penal laws*, having "no doubt but that the clergy, the proper defenders of "it, will be able to ſupport it by *reaſon and argument*."

But, my friends, this has not been the conduct of the legiſlators, or of the clergy. Not truſting to *reaſon*, or the *ſcriptures*, they muſt enact *laws*, with heavy penalties, to enforce the belief of their doctrines. And though through the liberality of the times, and not any particular generoſity of their own, they are aſhamed to execute them, and we, confiding in this, and not in any proper moderation of theirs, even turn their obſolete laws into ridicule, yet you ſee that, like *the laws of the Medes and Perſians*, they muſt remain unaltered, together with every thing elſe that bears the leaſt aſpect towards the *church*. This looks as if they themſelves conſidered it as no better than *a caſtle of cards*, which they are afraid of touching, leſt it ſhould all fall to pieces. If good reaſons cannot be alleged for retaining what is moſt manifeſtly abſurd, and what they themſelves are aſhamed to execute, yet you ſee that *ſomething*

muſt be ſaid; and weak as it is, I do not know that any thing better can be alleged, than what is here advanced by Mr. Madan, viz. that the repeal of this improper and unjuſt law to defend the doctrine of the trinity, would be to give a virtual ſanction to our conduct in writing againſt it.

There is another curious and inconſiſtent circumſtance in what Mr. Madan advances on the ſubject of this famous law. All who believe Chriſt to be *a man*, and not *God*, muſt neceſſarily think it *idolatry* to pay him divine honours. We have no other definition of *idolatry*, than *to worſhip as God that which is not God*. Do not all Proteſtants ſay it is idolatry in the Catholics to pray to the Virgin Mary, to Peter, Paul, or any other ſaints, or even to angels and archangels? Do you not continually charge the Catholics with idolatry on this principle? Now, it is upon the very ſame principle, and no other, that we, who conſider Chriſt as being a man, ſuch as Peter and Paul were, ſay that it muſt be *idolatry* to worſhip or to pray to *him*. This is only the neceſſary conſequence of avowing our belief, with what muſt follow from it. Yet Mr. Madan will allow us the one, without the other; as if he would allow us to *think* Trinitarians to be idolators, without permitting us to *call* them ſo. "They inſult us," he ſays, p. 19, "with the "charge of idolatry, on account of this doctrine," viz. the trinity, "they are at liberty ſo to do, through the mildneſs "of our principles, though perhaps they have not a right "to do it, upon any principle whatever;" that is, we have no right to *ſay* what we cannot help *thinking*. Where then is our toleration? Alas, it exiſts only in the *mildneſs of men's principles*, that is in their *good nature*, which is a very changeable thing, and not in the *laws*. If this *mildneſs* which Mr. Madan boaſts of was any thing of a ſtable nature, and was meant to be perpetual, it would certainly lead them to repeal the law, and not merely to ſuſpend the execution of it.

If this law againſt thoſe who declare their diſbelief of the doctrine of the trinity is never deſigned to be executed,

cuted, common ſenſe will ſay that it ought to be repealed, and that it ought not to remain as a diſgrace to our ſtatute book any longer. While it is ſuffered to continue there, it will always be thought by us that it is intended to be carried into execution, though not at preſent, yet *at ſome convenient opportunity*. If I be abſolutely determined never more to correct my child, and wiſh that he ſhould *know* my reſolution, I burn the rod. If I keep it, I certainly do it with the idea that ſome time or other it may be wanted. We Unitarians ſhall never think that any proper *toleration* is intended for us, while a law by means of which it is in the power of any man to perſecute and puniſh us *as ſuch*, ſhall remain unrepealed. And yet you ſee very clearly that the clergy, boaſting of their mild and tolerating principles, would not fail to make as ſtrenuous an oppoſition to the repeal of this law of king William, which makes it confiſcation of goods and impriſonment for life, to declare our diſbelief of the doctrine of the trinity, as to the repeal of the Teſt and Corporation Acts. Though neither of them are in fact, of any ſervice to their church at all, yet trembling at every ſhadow, and dreading they know not what, they are determined to oppoſe every thing that we apply for. Imagining, as it ſhould ſeem, that we are much more *quick ſighted* than themſelves, they ſuſpect that there is ſomething more in any thing that we aſk for than they are able to ſee.

Mr. Madan, quoting my *Letter to Mr. Pitt*, p. 26, endeavours to alarm you with our *farther claims*, when thoſe we are now making ſhall be granted; and as he drops the quotation, he leaves you to imagine that thoſe claims are abſolutely *endleſs*, and might lead to the total ruin of the conſtitution in church and ſtate. Now in that Letter, which I would wiſh you all to look into, I have diſtinctly marked what are *all* our claims as *Diſſenters*, diſtinct from thoſe improvements which I imagine might ſtill be made in the laws relating to religion in this country, after every thing that we can wiſh for as Diſſenters ſhall be granted. Theſe are, firſt, admiſſibility to all civil offices at the nomi-

nation of the crown, the diſcretion of which we are not diſpoſed to queſtion; ſecondly, full liberty to profeſs, and teach, all our religious principles, without the fear of ſuch laws as that of king William; and laſtly, to celebrate marriage among ourſelves, as the Quakers are allowed to do.

Now this is the full extent of all our claims *as Diſſenters*; and what is there ſo very alarming in it? And till theſe three articles be granted, our toleration is manifeſtly incomplete, becauſe we remain expoſed to civil penalties on account of our religious principles, which is the preciſe definition of *perſecution*. And if all the three claims above mentioned were granted, your eſtabliſhed church would ſtand not the leſs, but in reality the more, firm for it. Your church is guarded by its peculiar laws, and no perſon can derive any emolument from it, but thoſe who ſubmit to thoſe laws, and ſubſcribe to its articles. When we Diſſenters ſhall aſk for any thing that your church has to give, without ſubmitting to its laws, or ſubſcribing to its articles, then, but not before, ſay that we are attacking the eſtabliſhment. We do not deſire the repeal of the Act of king William any farther than it reſpects ourſelves. As the doctrine of the trinity is unqueſtionably an important article of *your* faith, let your clergy by all means be bound in the ſtricteſt manner to the profeſſion of it. They receive their emoluments on that condition. But why ſhould *we*, who do not receive thoſe emoluments, be bound to *their duty*, or be ſubjected to *their laws?*

Mr. Madan has thought ſo little on this ſubject, that he is not able to diſtinguiſh the claims of Diſſenters as ſuch, which would leave the church juſt as it is, and thoſe claims which affect the very vitals of it. His confuſion of ideas on this ſubject is evident in the following paragraph, p. 21, "The laſt pretended grievance which I ſhall at preſent no-
"tice (and perhaps it is the chief of their grievances) is the
"payment of tythes, and fees to the miniſters of the church
"of England, that is, the Diſſenters complain that the pro-
"viſion which is appropriated to the ſupport of thoſe miniſ-

"ters

" ters who diſcharge the offices and duties of the religion of " this country as eſtabliſhed by law may be reduced, and " withdrawn, at the caprice of ſectaries, for the ſupport of " nonconformiſts."

To ſay nothing of the contemptuous language, unworthy of a gentleman, and a ſcholar, and much more of a chriſtian, with which this paragraph, like the whole of the ſermon, is written, Mr. Madan miſtakes the very nature and object of our complaints. While there is a religion ſo eſtabliſhed by law as to be ſupported by any public fund, to which all ſhall equally contribute, the appropriation of that fund cannot be changed without affecting the eſtabliſhed religion. If we *ſectaries*, as Mr. Madan contemptuouſly calls us, demand that our proportion of the tithes be given to our own miniſters, how equitable ſoever the thing may be in itſelf, it is nothing that we could aſk *as Diſſenters*. We, and others, members of the eſtabliſhed church, may be convinced that ſuch a meaſure as this would be reaſonable in itſelf, beneficial to our country, and favourable to the intereſts of religion (as I ſhall proceed to ſhew that it would be) but then this is a ſpeculation of a very different nature from any thing that concerns Diſſenters as ſuch. The whole body of them formerly, and a great proportion of them at preſent, approve of an eſtabliſhment; and ſince it cannot be that of their *own religion*, they think that the preſent may do as well as any other, and would even prefer it to that of many other Diſſenters; and therefore they have no farther wiſh than ſuch a *full toleration* as Mr. Madan ſays they actually have, but which they find they have not, and would be very glad if he could procure for them.

In my opinion, however, and that of many others, it would be much better for the country, and for chriſtianity in general, if there was no ſuch thing as any civil eſtabliſhment of religion at all, but that every man ſhould be left to provide for himſelf with reſpect to religion, uſing his own beſt judgment, as he does in things of a different nature. I ſee no reaſon why any one man ſhould be compelled to pay for the *religion* of another man, any more

than

than for his inſtruction in *grammar*, *philoſophy*, or any thing elſe. But this I do not advance as a Diſſenter, but on the principles of *political philoſophy* in general. And that theſe principles of mine (though they are by no means peculiar to myſelf) which Mr. Madan would repreſent as infinitely alarming, have nothing in them at which you need to be alarmed, I ſhall clearly ſhew in my next letter, and let Mr. Madan, or any of your clergy, refute my arguments if they can.

Mr. Madan's *Sermon* being my *Text*, I ſhall think myſelf authorized by his example, to take the ſame liberties with *it*, that he has done with *his*, that is, to preach the very contrary doctrine. From a text which inculcates *meekneſs* and *forbearance*, and which diſcountenances all *evil ſpeaking*, he has endeavoured to inflame your paſſions by the groſſeſt and moſt abſurd calumnies. The ſtorm that he has raiſed I have endeavoured to allay, preaching the very doctrine to which his text ſhould have led him, by endeavouring to remove thoſe prejudices, which lead you to think ill of your neighbours, and thereby bring you to a better temper than that which he has manifeſted. I ſhall continue to do the ſame in the remaining Letters, and for this purpoſe ſhall go over all the articles that he has touched upon. But as a man may ſow more weeds in an hour, than another can root out in a month, I muſt be allowed more *time* and *ſpace* than Mr. Madan has taken; ſo that it may happen that a ſingle ſentence in his Sermon, ſhall give occaſion to a long letter of mine. But I ſhall not think much of my trouble in writing, provided you have patience to read; and I ſhall endeavour to write in ſuch a manner as to put you into better humour, and make you feel more pleaſantly than you did after hearing Mr. Madan's Sermon. For the feelings of a man who is angry, though ever ſo juſtly, are never comfortable.

Indeed, the more I reflect on the temper with which Mr. Madan muſt have written, the more concern it gives me, as an unpromiſing *feature of the times* we live in; reaſoning as follows. If his good ſenſe can be thus blinded, and if, notwithſtanding the ſweetneſs of his temper, and his po-

liſhed

liſhed manners, his paſſions can be ſo violently inflamed, as to abuſe us innocent Diſſenters in the manner that he has done, what muſt be the ſtrength of thoſe *principles* which have produced ſo unlooked for an effect? And what have we not to dread from them in perſons of inferior underſtandings, of leſs liberal education, and of harſher diſpoſitions? I ſhould not even wonder if, in underſtandings more clouded, and tempers more iraſcible, this extreme bigotry ſhould produce the effects of abſolute inſanity.

If Mr. Madan can really conſider all the Diſſenters of the preſent day as unqueſtionably republicans, and ſo ſtrongly inſinuate that we are all ready to treat the preſent king as Oliver Cromwell did Charles I. I have to rejoice in the *Act of indemnity*. Without this I ſhould now expect that, though my anceſtors, being churchmen, might have fought under the ſtandard of Charles I. I, being a Diſſenter, ſhould be actually indicted for the crime of murdering that bleſſed martyr, and that myſelf and my three ſons (for the politeneſs and *mildneſs* of which Mr. Madan makes ſuch a boaſt would perhaps ſpare my daughter) might be hanged, drawn and quartered, for our ſhare in that horrid tranſaction.

The philoſophical world has of late been amuſed with a ſtory of a poiſonous tree in the iſland of Java, that would not ſuffer any plant to grow, or any animal to approach, within twelve miles of it. But the murder of this king has a far more baneful and extenſive influence; and according to appearance, we can never remove far enough from it. I ſhould think, however, that the clergy ſhould fix ſome time, *a thouſand years* for example (for I would not be unreaſonable in fixing too ſhort a term of probation) after which, if the Diſſenters ſhould behave like other ſubjects, and kill no more kings, it ſhould be deemed illiberal in ſuch preachers as Mr. Madan to charge us with the crimes of *republicaniſm*, and *king-killing*. However, it ſeems hardly fair to infer a *habit* from a *ſingle act*, and we are not charged with killing any more kings than one.

The great merit, however, of this king Charles was his attachment to the church of England, to which the clergy conſidered

conſidered him as having been *a martyr*; and for this reaſon it is that the clergy purſue with ſuch indiſcriminate vengeance all perſons, whom they can have any pretence, how improbable ſoever, for charging with it. For this reaſon I ſhall in my next Letter conſider the nature and value of *civil eſtabliſhments of religion* in general, and then proceed to that of the *church of England* in particular, that you may judge whether it be *reaſon*, or merely *intereſt* and *paſſion*, that dictates ſuch Sermons as thoſe of Mr. Madan.

I am,

My good friends and neighbours,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of Religious Eſtabliſhments in general.

My Townſmen and Neighbours,

I SHALL now bring before you a ſubject which, from the manner in which it has been generally conſidered, you may imagine to be of a peculiarly difficult nature, and to which your underſtandings are not equal. I mean the *connection between the church and the ſtate*, or the uſe of *civil eſtabliſhments of religion*. But notwithſtanding this, I have no doubt but that I ſhall make it as perfectly intelligible to you, as any thing that I have yet treated of. I ſhall prove to you that thoſe very principles which your ſuperiors would have you take for granted, as *axioms*, or *certain truths*, on which they build others of very great conſequence, have themſelves no foundation at all, if either the *ſcriptures*, or *common-ſenſe*, be your rule of judgment concerning things.

Mr. Fox himſelf, who in point of magnanimity, force, and comprehenſion of mind, is at leaſt equal to any of our ſtateſmen,

ſtateſmen, and whoſe liberality of ſentiment has led him repeatedly to defend the cauſe of the Diſſenters in the houſe of Commons, ſtill takes it for granted that there ought to be a civil eſtabliſhment of religion in every country, thinking it no doubt abſolutely eſſential to good government. But, great as Mr. Fox's abilities may be, he may not have given ſufficient attention to this particular ſubject. Indeed, if he had, many doubts could not but have ariſen in his mind with reſpect to it. The generality of Diſſenters themſelves as I have ſaid, allow the propriety and uſe of ſome eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, and formerly they were univerſally of this opinion, though it is contrary to a juſt and received maxim of theirs properly interpreted, viz. That *human authority ought not to be interpoſed in matters of religion*, and indeed to our Saviour's own declaration, that *his kingdom is not of this world*.

If men are not to interpoſe their authority in matters of religion, they ought to refrain, not only from making *articles of faith*, and rules of *moral conduct*, to bind the conſciences of men (which they allow to be within the province of God only) but they ought not to enforce any decrees of men reſpecting religion by *civil penalties*. For this is evidently ſetting up *a kingdom of this world*, and applying human authority to matters of religion, things with reſpect to which Diſſenters heſitate not to ſay that every man ſhould be left to himſelf, to be guided by the dictates of his own conſcience, of which God is the only ſovereign.

If I break the peace of ſociety, if I injure my neighbour, in his perſon, property, or good name (things which human laws were intended to guard) I ought to be puniſhed by thoſe who adminiſter ſuch laws. But if I do any thing by which I offend *God* only, and not man, I ſhould be left to the judgment of God, in this world or the next. Theſe are very plain rules, and yet they are evidently violated whenever any body of men, clergy or laity, lay down any rules reſpecting religion, and enforce them by civil penalties.

It follows from theſe plain principles, that whether I chuſe to profeſs any particular mode of religion, or to have no religion at all, my neighbours and fellow citizens have no right to compel me. I do not moleſt them, and therefore they ought not to diſturb me. If therefore I do not chuſe to give any part of my property to the maintenance of religion, it does not concern *them*; and to compel me to pay money on a religious account, is real *injuſtice*, though ſanctioned by law. The civil magiſtrate has the power of the ſtronger, and I, as the weaker, muſt ſubmit; but it is on the ſame principle that I ſubmit to an highwayman, or a robber, at whoſe mercy I neceſſarily am. He may ſay that he has a right to take it, but he makes himſelf the judge, and to me his deciſion may appear unjuſt.

If we interpret the ſcriptures by the conduct of the apoſtles and that of the early chriſtians for three centuries, you will be ſatisfied that I do not carry this principle too far. In the New Teſtament you will find that whatever any man gave to the ſupport of religion, it was perfectly *voluntary*. The primitive church had biſhops, deacons, and other officers, who, giving their whole time to the inſtruction, &c. of others, were maintained from the common ſtock; and the chriſtians of thoſe times muſt have been at great expence in building places of public worſhip, maintaining their poor, &c. But all theſe expences, great as they were, were defrayed by voluntary contribution.

It will be ſaid that, in that age, there was no civil power that *could* be applied in favour of chriſtianity. But neither our Saviour nor the apoſtles gave any directions about ſuch a thing as *a civil eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity*, when chriſtians *ſhould* have the power of making one. And yet, as our Saviour diſtinctly foreſaw, and frequently referred to, the univerſal prevalence of his religion, he muſt have known that it would be wanted, if that change in the external circumſtances of his religion would authorize ſuch a meaſure.

But what apprehenſion could the apoſtles have of the *uſe* of a civil eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, when they found no

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want of it in their own times? Read all their epiſtles, and you will find no wiſh expreſſed by the writers of them, of any civil power to inforce the laws of Chriſt. Nay, without the aid of any civil power, it gained ground in the world, to the over-turning of the long-eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of heatheniſm, which was ſupported by that power. With what face, then, can any chriſtian at this day ſay that civil power is *neceſſary* to chriſtianity, when it never flouriſhed ſo much as when it was entirely deſtitute of it, and oppoſed by it?

Chriſtians ſhould conſider their religion as diſgraced by any alliance with civil power. The voluntary zeal of the ſincere profeſſors of chriſtianity would at this day, as well as in former times, ſupply all the funds which are really wanted for the ſupport of religion; and if men offend againſt the laws of religion, they ſhould, as our Saviour preſcribed, and the apoſtles practiſed, be cut off from chriſtian ſocieties, and be conſidered as perſons with whom they have no religious connexion; but not puniſhed by fines, impriſonments, or any civil inconveniences whatever, ſuch as are the conſequence of your excommunications. In this manner chriſtianity is actually ſupported by all Diſſenters, compelled as they are to bear their ſhare in the ſupport of a much more expenſive ſyſtem, by which they are oppreſſed.

It will hardly be ſaid that the authority of the civil magiſtrate was neceſſary for the *appointment*, as well as the *payment*, of biſhops, and other miniſters in chriſtian churches. For not only in the time of the apoſtles, but long after the undue interference of the civil power in matters of religion, it would have been thought an intolerable grievance; if all chriſtian ſocieties had not had the free choice of their own miniſters of every kind. But men who have been uſed to ſervitude of any kind, get in time an habit of acquieſcence, and ſometimes fancy that there is a real advantage in what is moſt diſgraceful to them. Thus you are very well content to have no vote at all in the nomination of your own *ſervants*, for *miniſters* of the goſpel are no other than

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their title imports, being perſons who are employed by chriſtian ſocieties for a certain ſtipend, to do a certain duty.

Theſe are the pure and rational principles of chriſtian churches. Such as we find in the ſcriptures, and in all the primitive times. But how have we deviated from them; and in conſequence of it how has the church of Chriſt adopted the maxims of the kingdoms of this world? Men have aſſumed authority ſuch as your church expreſsly avows, to *determine controverſies of faith*. They have made numberleſs regulations about religion, and they have enforced the obſervance of them by fines, impriſonments, and dreadful puniſhments of various kinds, ſo that what is now called *the church* is as much *a kingdom of this world*, as *the ſtate*.

The great argument for theſe civil eſtabliſhments of chriſtianity is that religion promotes good morals, and that good morals are neceſſary to the well being of civil ſociety. Now I am far from denying the uſefulneſs of religion, and eſpecially of chriſtianity, in this reſpect; and on this account I have written ſo much (more I believe than any other perſon in this country) to prove its divine authority, and to explain its principles. But the friends of church eſtabliſhments have made a great deal too much of this argument. Civil ſociety has ſubſiſted very well under all forms of religion, even the heathen ones. For the Roman empire was well regulated before the knowledge of chriſtianity, yea better than ſeveral chriſtian countries ſince. And chriſtianity will operate in favour of good morals without being *eſtabliſhed*, and even more ſo than when it is. The man who truly fears God, and believes a future ſtate, will be a good moral man, and an uſeful member of ſociety, though the prince and the ſtate ſhould not concern themſelves about it. Nay he will be virtuous, when they are wicked.

Beſides, though religion, or the belief of a God, a providence, and a future ſtate, have its *uſe* with reſpect to ſociety, it is not abſolutely *neceſſary* for that purpoſe. Good laws and a proper adminiſtration of civil government, will

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be ſufficient to keep men from injuring one another. It is a common intereſt to reſtrain thoſe vices which are injurious to the community, and the force of the community may eaſily be applied for this purpoſe. Only let there be a good legiſlature, good judges, and good civil officers (which the temporal intereſt of all ſtates will provide) and you need not fear but that the internal peace of any country, which is the only proper object of civil government, will be ſufficiently ſecured.

Great numbers of perſons in this country, and many more abroad, are actually without religion. They believe in no God, or future ſtate; they frequent no place of public worſhip, and they know no more of the Bible than they do of the Koran; and yet, with reſpect of *the peace of ſociety*, they behave like other people, and are no more diſpoſed to diſturb others, than others are to diſturb them. Beſides, there is no danger of mankind in general being without religion. Nay, I am well perſuaded there would be much more of it without any eſtabliſhment than with one; and that religion which men will voluntarily adopt and ſupport, will have more influence on their morals, and be more favourable to the good of ſociety, than any which any ſtate will adopt and enforce.

Be perſuaded, my countrymen, to think a little for yourſelves, on this ſubject, as well as every other in which you are intereſted, as the reformers from popery did before you, and conſider not ſo much what you find *eſtabliſhed*, as what is *right in itſelf*, and *beneficial to ſociety*; and whether *innovations*, which your clergy dread ſo much, may not be *improvements*. Time was when chriſtianity itſelf was an innovation. The reformation by Luther was a great innovation. At one time preſbyterianiſm was eſtabliſhed by law in this country, and then the introduction of epiſcopacy was an innovation. The act of toleration, which the clergy now think to be an honour to their church, though they were very much averſe to the meaſure was an innovation. The Teſt and Corporation Acts, which they now con-

ſider as the great bulwarks of their church, were originally nothing more than innovations; and if the repeal of them be an innovation alſo, there is nothing to be apprehended from the meaſure *as ſuch*. Whenever things are got into a bad ſtate, there can be no amendment without innovation; and ſurely you will not ſay that any thing *human* is perfect, and requires no *amendment*, that is, no *innovation*. Do not then partake of the fears of your clergy, who feel for themſelves more than for you; and if you find *abuſes*, either in the church or the ſtate, have the good ſenſe, and the ſpirit, to rectify them, without any dread of innovation.

The *conſtitution*, they tell you, conſiſts of two parts, the *church* and the *ſtate*. In fact, it conſiſts of many parts, and the laws relating to the prerogatives of the king, the privileges of the lords, thoſe of the people, even thoſe relating to the poor, to debtors, and to criminals, are as much parts of the conſtitution, as thoſe relating to religion, and the clergy. There are as many parts as there are different *objects* which government embraces; and why ſhould any one of theſe be conſidered as more ſacred, and exempt from innovation, than another?

But admitting for the preſent, that the conſtitution has but *two parts*, the *church* and the *ſtate*; all that can be pretended is that they are equally ſacred, and not one more than the other. But the clergy would perſuade you that the church is infinitely more ſacred than the other part of the conſtitution. It is a thing that muſt never more be touched by the hand of man, though it was as much the *creature of man*, as the ſtate; and *this* requires continual alterations. For never a year paſſes without many acts of parliament calculated to reform abuſes in the ſtate; and abuſes, we find, will creep in, let men do all they can to keep them out.

Formerly we had many acts of parliament to reform abuſes in the church alſo. This part of the conſtitution, the liturgy, and the articles of the church of England, were not ſettled at once, but at different periods, and all by Acts

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of parliament. Your preſent hierarchy was not the immediate appointment of God, or of an angel, but the production of fallible men; and can you ſee nothing clearer than your anceſtors, juſt emerging from the darkneſs of popery? In their moſt diſadvantageous circumſtances, had they the wiſdom to ſettle every thing in ſuch a manner, as that there ſhould never more be any occaſion for change and improvement?

Your church of England was not a thing that exiſted from the beginning of chriſtianity. Our anceſtors were all Roman Catholics, and at the time of the reformation had been ſo for many centuries; ſo that *Churchmen* are only *Diſſenters* from the church of Rome. Now in this ancient and long eſtabliſhed church of Rome (to which, according to Mr. Madan, you ought to have remained in quiet ſubjection to this very day) were many corruptions of pure chriſtianity, which had been accumulating for ages; and ſome reformed churches corrected ſome of them, and others more. In like manner, we are Diſſenters from your church; but we did not arrive to what we now are all at once. My anceſtors did not teach me what I teach others; and I am far from ſuppoſing that all improvement will end with me. In all caſes in which *men* determine, room ſhould be left for the reviſion, and ſubſequent determinations, of other men, who may ſee farther than they do.

Suppoſing that at the ſame time in which your preſent eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment was fixed, which was about two centuries ago, laws had been made to determine in what manner all houſes ſhould be built, grounds cultivated, and all manufactories carried on. Suppoſe that when public proviſion was made for an order of *clergy*, to take care of your *ſouls*, as it is called, an order of *phyſicians* had alſo been eſtabliſhed, to take care of your *bodies* (in which the ſtate is certainly as much concerned) and that theſe ſtate phyſicians had been obliged to adminiſter certain preſcribed medicines in all diſeaſes; and the king and parliament who

fixed your church eſtabliſhment were certainly as well qualified to judge of matters of this kind. If this ſyſtem had actually taken place, it is moſt probable that the great bulk of the nation, being accuſtomed to theſe inſtitutions, and ſeeing no others, might have applauded the *wiſdom of their anceſtors*, and might have exclaimed as loudly againſt all *innovation* in things *temporal*, as your clergy now do with reſpect to things *ſpiritual*.

The *ſtate phyſicians* would certainly have been as much alarmed at any alteration in that part of the ſyſtem which reſpected *them* as the clergy have always been about things in which *they* are intereſted. They would have exclaimed that the *conſtitution* was in danger of being violated, if ſo much as a new medicine had been introduced; ſaying that if innovations once began to be made, no man could tell where they would ſtop; and that if ſo material a part of the conſtitution as that in which *medicine*, and the *bodily health* of all the ſubjects of the ſtate ſhould be changed, the whole ſyſtem being ſettled at the ſame time, and being firmly compacted together, it would fall at once, and univerſal ruin be the iſſue.

This is the very thing the clergy are ſaying now. But, my friends, there is no more reaſon in *their* caſe at preſent, than there would have been in that of the *phyſicians* I have been ſuppoſing. As to the court, and the miniſter of the day; having had the appointment of theſe phyſicians, and having of courſe been ſerved by them (as, for the ſame reaſon, they now are by the generality of the clergy, who muſt look up to the court for any great preferment) they would have found as good reaſons for the ſupport of the ſyſtem which ſupported them, as Mr. Pitt can now find for the ſupport of the church, and the continuance of the Teſt and Corporation Acts.

But when changes have begun to be made in things of greater or leſs conſequence, and mankind are at liberty to make uſe of their reaſon, and conſult their own convenience,

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they will ſoon find that, having had the experience of others before them, they will be able to do better for themſelves than their wiſe anceſtors did.

After the eſtabliſhment of ſuch a ſyſtem as I have before ſuppoſed, if, in conſequence of any great convulſion of ſtate (for great and beneficial changes are ſeldom made without them) you had been at liberty to pull down your old wooden houſes, and to build more convenient and elegant ones, of brick or ſtone, or whatever materials you pleaſed; if you had been allowed to make a few trials of new methods of cultivating your grounds, to diverſify your manufactures, and to employ what phyſicians you pleaſed, giving them liberty to try new medicines, and new modes of treating diſeaſes; you would wonder at your ſtupidity in bearing with the awkward and inconvenient ſyſtem of your fathers ſo long as you did.

Now, depend upon it, the very ſame will be the caſe when this old *church eſtabliſhment* of yours, to which you have been ſo long attached, and which conſequently many of you think ſo *ſacred*, and ſo much *admire* (but which others of you, who have ſeen a little more of the world, I well know, begin to think looks rather *old faſhioned*) ſhall be thought a proper ſubject of *examination*, and you ſhall be allowed to think and act for yourſelves, as you now do with reſpect to your buildings, your grounds, and your manufactures. You will find that, with reſpect to *religion*, as well as other things, *wiſdom did not die with your anceſtors*, and that you yourſelves will be able to do better than they did.

Let every pariſh be left to its own liberty, and every man give his tythes (or what ſhall be deemed an equivalent for them) to whatever chriſtian miniſter he pleaſes, let him conduct your public worſhip in whatever manner you yourſelves ſhall moſt approve; and let him be choſen, or diſmiſſed, according to your own judgment of his character and behaviour, and you will ſoon have much better miniſters, and much better religious ſervices, than you now have;

and you will wonder at your own ſtupidity, and that of your wiſe fathers, in going on ſo long as you have done, ſubmitting to be guided and oppreſſed by others.

As to the different methods into which different pariſhes, or different parts of the ſame pariſh, might fall, you will ſoon find that there was no more reaſon why you ſhould quarrel with one another about *them*, than about the different methods of building your houſes, making your clothes, or any thing elſe that you now look upon with perfect indifference. Beſides, as you would then ſee each others different methods in every thing relating to religion (and the ſtate taking no concern in it, and not favouring one party more than another, there would be no improper bias upon your judgments) that mode which in time ſhould appear to be the beſt would be generally adopted; and thus at length a better foundation might be laid for *uniformity*, if there be any advantage in it, than upon any other plan whatever. As to your rulers, who ſeldom think much about religion, for them to tell you what you are to *think*, and what you are to *do*, in order to go to heaven, where they have very little intereſt, is moſt impertinent. Let them content themſelves with taking care of your intereſt in *this world*, and that is rather more than they are equal to, for they often make ſad blunders, and bring you into greater difficulties than you would ever have brought yourſelves. But as to *a world to come*, tell them that you will think more about it, than they ſeem to have any leiſure or diſpoſition to do, and that you will provide for yourſelves as well as you can.

You will be told that the queſtion of *the alliance between church and ſtate* is of a deep political nature, and that you can be no judges of it. But in the ſame manner you are told that there are many deep myſteries in religion, and therefore that your clergy muſt teach you what to *think*, or rather what to *ſay*, about them. But be perſuaded to think better of yourſelves, and of your own underſtandings. Theſe things are not, in reality, of ſo difficult a nature as many things

things in your common trades and buſineſſes. The moſt important queſtions relating to *religion* are the plaineſt things in the world, and require nothing but a common underſtanding, honeſtly applied, to comprehend them. The whole of the goſpel was at firſt preached to the *poor*, perſons of no education whatever, and therefore muſt have been a very plain thing. Were not the apoſtles as plain men as yourſelves, moſt of them having followed laborious and common occupations till they were conſiderably advanced in life, when they could not have been taught any thing very deep or myſterious? Indeed, all that they had to learn, or to teach, conſiſted of a very few exceedingly plain, but very important articles; as, if you will give me the hearing, I ſhall clearly ſhew you in the courſe of theſe Letters; and could they ſee the ſtrange long *creeds* recited in your churches, and in the acts of ſolemn chriſtian councils, they would not have been able to make any thing of them. The very terms in which they are expreſſed would have been unintelligible to them. And if they had been told that men were required to give an unfeigned aſſent to ſuch things under pain of everlaſting damnation, they would ſhake their heads, and hold up their hands, unable to expreſs their aſtoniſhment.

As to the uſe of religion, or church eſtabliſhments, to any ſtate, you are as able to judge of it as your governors. The only uſe of *government* itſelf is to enable men to live in ſociety uſeful to one another, and without any apprehenſion of danger, either from perſons of their own community, or thoſe of others. The real uſe of religion to a *ſtate* is only to promote good morals among the members of it, to remind you of your duty as honeſt men and good citizens, and diſpoſe you to do good offices, and not ill ones, to each other. If you had been heathens, and had been obedient to good laws, and ready to defend your country againſt invaders, it would not have been the buſineſs of your governors to teach you chriſtianity. If they had thought it to be true, they would have acted a commendable part in en-

deavouring, like other well meaning men, to convince you of its truth; but they ought not to oblige you to give ſalaries to the preachers of the new religion, whether you approved of it or not, and to lay taxes upon you in the form of *tythes*, or in any other manner whatever, for that purpoſe; becauſe the end of civil ſociety was already anſwered without it, ſince you lived in peace among yourſelves, and were not diſpoſed to moleſt others.

I have no doubt of the truth of chriſtianity myſelf, and, as I have told you before, and you may ſee with your own eyes whenever you pleaſe, I have written more than any other perſon now living in this country to convince others of the truth of it; and the reaſon why I have taken ſo much pains to do this, is becauſe I am convinced of the great value and uſe of it. I have alſo written a great deal to prove that that mode of chriſtianity which I profeſs myſelf is preferable to any other, being more agreeable to truth, and better calculated to anſwer the great end of religion, which is to make men virtuous here in order to be happy hereafter. But what is of moſt uſe in chriſtianity, that beſides which every thing elſe is a mere trifle, is the belief that Chriſt will certainly come again to raiſe the dead, and judge the world, and to give unto every man according to his works; and this is what *all* chriſtians believe. Conſequently, with reſpect to the great *uſe of chriſtianity to ſociety*, there is no occaſion for the ſtate to give any preference whatever to one denomination of chriſtians more than to another, becauſe they all anſwer the purpoſes of government equally well; and they would do it ſtill better if the civil magiſtrate would leave them alone, and give no preference to one more than to another.

This you ſee to be the caſe in fact. In this very town there are Churchmen, Diſſenters of various denominations, Preſbyterians, Independents, Anabaptiſts, general and particular; there are Catholics, Quakers, and Methodiſts, &c. You are told that this man is of one perſuaſion, and that man of another, and on a Sunday you ſee them going to different

different places of public worſhip; but you would never have found this difference in their common dealings, and in their lives. In general they are all equally ſober, induſtrious, and well behaved; and if there be bad men, as there are in all places, they are not in general of one perſuaſion more than of another.

The only reaſon that can be with any plauſibility alleged why the ſtate ſhould give a preference to one mode of religion rather than to another, is to prevent *confuſion*. But is this confuſion worth preventing at the price that muſt neceſſarily be given for *uniformity?* For notwithſtanding all that the ſtate can do for any one particular mode of religion, many people will think for themſelves, and many will prefer another. Of courſe, they will be offended by any preference given to others, to which they will think themſelves equally entitled. For the ſake, then, of diſtinguiſhing one ſet of ſubjects, no better than the reſt in a civil capacity, all the reſt muſt be diſgraced, at leaſt, if not ſubjected to cruel perſecutions, and compelled to ſupport what they do not approve. Now this is certainly a great *evil* in a country, ſubjecting great numbers of perſons to real hardſhips, and it ought to be great *good* indeed, that can counterbalance it.

But, on the contrary, if you examine all the evils that muſt neceſſarily ariſe from civil eſtabliſhments of religion, you will find that for the ſake of preventing an evil of the moſt trifling nature, and which, after all, never can be prevented (for in the eſtabliſhed church itſelf there are perſons who, if they think at all, will think very differently, and though they ſubmit to authority, will do it with much reluctance) evils of a moſt ſerious nature are introduced, viz. the greater or leſs oppreſſion of many members of the ſtate, generally the moſt conſcientious men in it, becauſe, notwithſtanding the hardſhips to which they are expoſed, they chuſe to diſſent from the eſtabliſhed worſhip; and, what ought to concern every body, a great *diminution of public liberty*. For the civil governor, by favouring the religion of ſome of the ſubjects, and diſcountenancing that of others,

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acquires a ſource of corruption and influence which would not otherwiſe be open to him. If the teachers of the favoured religion be of his appointment, and if they muſt look up to him for any conſiderable emolument, he will certainly, if they be *men*, command their ſervices, and thereby ſecure to himſelf more power than the good of the whole requires.

Theſe are unqueſtionably great and ſerious evils; and if nothing but the real *uſe* of a religion to a *country* was conſidered, and not the intereſt of the *court* and of the *miniſtry*, which is generally oppoſite to that of the people, you would not heſitate a moment to decide againſt the ſyſtem.

Perhaps you will underſtend this ſubject, of the real uſe of religion to a country, a little better by conſidering the ſtate of your town of Birmingham in this reſpect. There are in it five places of worſhip for members of the church of England, and fourteen for the different claſſes of Diſſenters and Methodiſts. Of about ſeventy thouſand inhabitants, it is not ſuppoſed that more than five thouſand attend any place of public worſhip on any one day, ſo that perhaps not much more than twice this number, that is ten thouſand, attend any public worſhip at all, or can be ſaid to *have*, or at leaſt much to *value*, any religion. On the whole, it is pretty clear, from the beſt accounts that I can collect, that there are more perſons attend public worſhip in this town *out* of the eſtabliſhed churches, than *in* them. Conſequently, of the ſeventy thouſand inhabitants of this town, ſixty-five thouſand (including the five thouſand who have ſome religion, and the ſixty thouſand who have none) are compelled to pay a very great annual ſum, to ſupport the religion of the other five thouſand. Now, is there any natural reaſon or equity in this? And do theſe five thouſand, who do not pay a tenth part of the expence of their own religion, behave better as citizens than the other five thouſand, who, beſides paying for their own religion, pay much more towards that of their neighbours? Or do they behave ſo much better than thoſe who profeſs no religion at all, as to make it worth the while of the community at large to be at that expence for

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them? Were all the inhabitants left to their free votes, there can be no doubt but that the ſixty-five thouſand would bid the five thouſand pay for their own religion, if they choſe to have any. Conſequently, they are taxed and oppreſſed to ſerve a minority. If thoſe who attend public worſhip more or leſs, be eſtimated at twenty thouſand, ſtill as more of this additional number worſhip *out* of the churches than *in* them, the great majority will be made to pay for the minority.

As to thoſe who conſcientiouſly worſhip God in places which Mr. Madan contemptuouſly calls *conventicles*, they certainly behave as well in ſociety as thoſe who frequent the *churches*. Few or none of the criminals whom you are continually carrying to Warwick ever belong to any of our ſocieties, and we ſeldom trouble you with our poor. Look into your jails and workhouſes, and you will find very few Diſſenters in them. Inſtead, therefore, of being treated with contempt and inſult, as we continually are by ſuch preachers as Mr. Madan, we are intitled to your thanks; as our religion, which teaches us to behave ſo well, and be ſo little burthenſome to you, not only coſts you nothing, but as we contribute our full ſhare to the maintenance of yours.

In fact you members of the church of England are, in the eye of reaſon, greatly in debt to the Diſſenters. If what we have given to the ſupport of your religion from the time of the eſtabliſhment of it were reckoned up, it would amount to a very great ſum; and that this is *a debt*, which ought to repaid, is moſt evident, becauſe it is *money advanced by us for your uſe*. If this ſum was repaid, as in equity it ought to be, it would ſupply all the expence of our religion for centuries to come.

You will ſay that you are under no obligation to do this, becauſe what we have paid for your benefit was by Act of parliament. But can an Act of parliament authorize a manifeſt injuſtice? And when you are taxed with oppreſſing your neighbours in exacting of them that for which you have given them no equivalent, will it be ſufficient, at the great day of judgment, to ſay that you had an act of parliament for doing

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it. They were acts of parliament that authorized the burning of Proteſtants in bloody queen Mary's time. But will thoſe acts of parliament juſtify Bonner and Gardiner, and other popiſh biſhops and popiſh ſtateſmen, who promoted that horrid perſecution? You do not believe that they will. And if ſo, neither will any act of parliament, paſſed before or ſince that time, excuſe you in the ſight of God, for exacting of any man more than, in the eye of reaſon and equity, he ought to pay. If an act of parliament will not juſtify the taking men's *lives*, neither will it juſtify the taking their *money*.

Whatever, therefore, you may think about this matter, the church of England, as a body (without conſidering the cruelties inflicted upon the Diſſenters during all the reigns of Elizabeth, James I. Charles I. Charles II. and James II.) ſtands a debtor in the book of God's account to the Diſſenters, for their proportion of the tythes, for whatever has been exacted from them for the repair of churches, and for every other expence from which the Diſſenters as ſuch derive no advantage. And yet, inſtead of contributing to the expence of building or repairing our meeting-houſes, in return for what we do for yours, you think you do us a great favour in permitting us to build them with our own money, and that we are allowed to live peaceably among you, promoting the good of the country, by our induſtry and ſobriety, which in general are conſpicuous and exemplary.

This you call *toleration*, and make a mighty boaſt of it, as if it was a great *favour* that you do us, and much more than you are obliged to grant. But thus many other *debtors*, inſtead of paying what they owe, abuſe their *creditors*; and many more would do it if an Act of parliament would clear them, and authorize their inſolence. Acts of parliaments, to be ſure, can do wonders. They can make and unmake kings. They changed the eſtabliſhed church of England from popery to proteſtantiſm, and they can change it from proteſtantiſm to popery again. Acts of parliament can alter your liturgy, and from a *trinitarian*, can make it an *unita-*

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rian one. They can aboliſh *tythes*, and order that the ſalaries of the clergy, like thoſe of civil offices, be paid out of the public treaſury. They can reduce the emoluments of ſome livings, and by that means raiſe the value of others, ſo that every man's ſalary would bear a juſt proportion to his duty. And ſuch things as theſe, which the parliament can do, if you were unanimous in petitioning for, you would certainly have.

But there are ſome things that kings, lords, and commons cannot do, and as they cannot make *white black*, nor *black white*; ſo neither can they make vice to be virtue, or virtue vice. Conſequently, they cannot make that to be *honeſt*, which, in the eye of God and of reaſon, is eſſentially *diſhoneſt*.

An act of parliament may give all my property to my next neighbour, without alleging any reaſon for it, and I, having no power of reſiſtance, muſt ſubmit. But in that caſe, would not king, lords, and commons be as great raſcals as a highwayman who ſhould do the ſame thing in the ſame arbitrary and violent manner. Do not then depend too much upon acts of parliament, eſpecially in matters of religion. In all things of this nature obey *God* and not *man*. Conſult the dictates of your own natural reaſon and conſcience.

If all who really labour in God's great *harveſt*, and eſpecially thoſe who *preach the goſpel to the poor* (who ſtand in the greateſt need of inſtruction) were to receive their wages, in proportion to the real uſe of their labours, out of the tythes, and other public funds, from which the clergy are now paid for doing the ſame work, it would be no ſmall ſum that would go out of their pockets into thoſe of the *methodiſt preachers*, who have civilized, and chriſtianized, a great part of the uncivilized, and unchriſtianized part of this country. But if they be not recompenced out of *that fund*, they will be recompenced out of *another*, ſomething more permanent. When *this great globe, and all that it inherit, ſhall diſſolve*, I had rather be found in the company of ſuch humble labourers in God's vineyard than in that

that of the generality of your dignified, and beneficed clergy, *who have had their good things in this life.*

From the veneration with which Mr. Madan would inſpire you for *civil eſtabliſhments of chriſtianity*, and the abhorrence and contempt with which he treats *Diſſenters*, you would naturally imagine that ſuch eſtabliſhments of chriſtianity have been from its firſt promulgation, and that our mode of religion is quite an *upſtart thing*; whereas the very contrary is well known to be the truth of the caſe. In every article in which we differ, our ſyſtem is the antient one, and yours modern.

What is it that diſtinguiſhes Diſſenters from the members of eſtabliſhed churches? They are the following particulars, and no other whatever. They chuſe and they pay their own miniſters, without burdening the ſtate with any expence on that account. They alſo diſmiſs their miniſters whenever they are diſatisfied with them, and they acknowledge no authority in any man, or in any body of men, to ſettle articles of faith, or rules of diſcipline for them. In all theſe things they judge and act for themſelves, holding themſelves to be anſwerable to God and their own conſciences only.

Theſe principles are common to all Diſſenters, though we differ much from one another in other things, and in all of them we differ from eſtabliſhed churches, like that of England. Your creeds and forms of public worſhip are dictated by acts of parliament. Your miniſters, at leaſt moſt of them, are appointed either by the king, or particular patrons. You have only a right to complain in caſe of their miſbehaviour, but without any other controul over their conduct. You have no power either to chuſe, or to diſmiſs them, and their incomes are fixed by the law; ſo that whether you approve of their ſervices, or not, they can enforce the payment of their dues, *to the uttermoſt farthing* by a regular well known courſe of law. They can levy a diſtreſs, and throw you into priſon, for the non-payment of tythes, as well as for any other other debt.

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Now all theſe things are comparatively of late date in the hiſtory of chriſtianity, and they took place not all at once, in conſequence of any proper *alliance with the ſtate*, which is entirely a fiction of modern times, but one after another, as circumſtances were favourable to the clergy. For they, like other bodies of men, never loſt ſight of their intereſt; and the ignorance and ſuperſtitition of former times were exceedingly favourable to them.

When the emperors became chriſtians, they gave power to the biſhops, whom they were then diſpoſed to favour, to enforce the decrees of their councils, with reſpect to articles of faith, and points of diſcipline. But the church funds, from the voluntary contributions of chriſtians, being ſufficient for the purpoſe of them, they made no farther proviſion for the ſupport of the clergy. They only ſhewed their piety, as other rich individuals did, by building churches, making preſents of plate, and veſtments, and grants of lands to ſome of them. By their example they encouraged theſe donations, and thus the church grew rich, and was ſupported by its own proper funds, as any other corporate body might be.

But the emperors never interfered in the choice of biſhops, till the biſhops of Rome becoming very wealthy, and from their peculiar ſituation having great power, the emperors aſſumed a negative on the choice of the people, though there is hardly any example of their making a real uſe of it. They ſeldom or never preſumed to recommend any particular perſon antecedently to the choice of the people. In the appointment of the ordinary biſhops and clergy they never interfered at all, directly or indirectly.

When, upon the irruption of the northern nations, and the eſtabliſhment of the feudal ſyſtem, churchmen got poſſeſſion of *eſtates in fee*, thoſe eſtates were ſubject to the ſame laws as if they had been held by other perſons. And as the biſhops and abbots had no natural *heirs*, the princes beſtowed them, at leaſt the *temporalities*, as the eſtates were called, on whom they pleaſed. By this means the greater biſhops and

abbots

abbots became temporal lords, and in conſequence of this obtained a right to ſit in the council of the nation, along with other peers of the realm. But this did not better the condition of the ordinary clergy, or provide for their maintenance by law.

Tythes, by which they are now legally maintained, took place very gradually, and were firſt given voluntarily, ſometimes to the poor, and ſometimes to the church, at the pleaſure of the donor. By degrees, however, the clergy excluded the poor, and appropriated all the tythes to themſelves, and about A. D. 600, tythes, from being eſtabliſhed as a *cuſtom*, became in ſome inſtances *legal rights*; becauſe many eſtates were bequeathed with an obligation to pay tythes to particular churches. When tythes were left to diſtant churches, the prieſts of the pariſh in which the eſtate lay uſed to complain; and at length, but ſo late as the reign of our king John, the pope made a law that all tythes ſhould be paid to the pariſh prieſt; and after ſome time they were levied by law, in all pariſhes without exception.

Thus you ſee that this boaſted eſtabliſhment of yours, venerable, as you think, for its *antiquity*, is in fact but *of yeſterday*, and derives its being from a ſucceſſion of *innovations*, all of them departures from the genuine principles of chriſtianity; and all together they form a ſyſtem of which the apoſtles could not have had any idea. On the contrary, all *our* cuſtoms are exactly thoſe of the primitive church, ſuch as were univerſal in the chriſtian world before any eſtabliſhment was known.

I am,

My good friends and neighbours,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

Remarks on what Mr. Madan has obſerved on this Subject.

My Townſmen and Neighbours,

MR. Madan repreſents the cauſe of Churchmen, in oppoſing the repeal of the Corporation and Teſt Acts, as a *great conſtitutional cauſe*, and this, he ſays in his Preface, is the chief motive for the publication of his Sermon. But be aſſured it is conſtitutional only with reſpect to *the clergy*, and not to *yourſelves*. For it is only a power of compelling you to pay them for what inſtructions they are pleaſed to give you, and to pay them in the moſt burthenſome manner poſſible; which often operates to defeat the end of all their inſtructions, and which leaves you no controul upon their conduct, whether you approve of it or not. This, indeed, is the caſe of all eſtabliſhments; but it is evidently a diminution of your liberty, and an augmentation of their power. It is, beſides, an inſult upon you, as it implies that, if you were not thus compelled to have ſuch a religion as the government provides for you, you would have none at all.

But in the primitive times, religion, and the maintenance of it, were, as I have ſhewn, voluntary things, and the compulſory payment of tythes, &c. (of which no hint is given in the New Teſtament) introduced the tyranny of the clergy, and the oppreſſion of the laity; and this kept increaſing till at the time of the reformation, no tyranny was ever ſo dreadful. The heathen emperors themſelves never carried on a more bloody perſecution than did chriſtians who had power againſt other chriſtians who had no power, and all for the ſupport of an antichriſtian hierarchy. And all that was done in England by Henry VIII. and queen Elizabeth, was ſetting up another hierarchy in its place. Mr. Madan, however, quite forgetting the primitive and apoſtolic ſtate of things, in which all perſons were perfectly free to ſupport

their religion in whatever manner they pleaſed, ſays, p. 6, "the indiſpenſable neceſſity of ſome national church," that is, a church to which men are compelled to contribute, "is "ſo clear in itſelf, ſo capable of abundant proof, that it may "be rather affirmed as an axiom, than offered as a propo-"ſition." Indeed, it is much more eaſy to *affirm* this, than to *prove* it; and in fact, the very reverſe of what he affirms as an axiom, may be demonſtrated from the *New Teſtament* (to which ſuch a conſtitution is altogether unknown) from *the nature of things*, and from *actual fact*. But Mr. Madan taking his axiom for granted, ſays, p. 7, "every "ſtate and its national church have a mutual connexion, "and a reciprocal intereſt." But here the *national church* means nothing more than the *national clergy*, and not the *chriſtian people* of which that church conſiſts. For *your* intereſts, as I have ſhewn, are ſacrificed for *theirs*.

The aſſurance with which churchmen continually repeat their favorite maxims, without the leaſt regard to the actual ſtate of the world, which is a ſtanding refutation of their aſſertions, is aſtoniſhing. Thus Mr. Madan ſays, p. 7. "what civilized ſtate was ever known permanent and "flouriſhing, unconnected with ſome ſyſtem of religious "tenets." To ſay nothing of this maxim being equally capable of being urged in favour of heatheniſm, mahometaniſm, popery, or any ſyſtem of religion whatever, Mr. Madan certainly never thought of America, when he wrote his Sermon. For that country has been *permanent* and *flouriſhing* for near two centuries, without any ſuch ſyſtem, as he imagines to be *abſolutely neceſſary*. In many of thoſe provinces no man was ever compelled to pay to the ſupport of any particular ſpecies of religion approved by the ſtate: for the ſtate left every man to chuſe his own. And in Penſylvania, which, unfortunately for Mr. Madan's hypotheſis, was from the firſt, and ever continued to be, the moſt flouriſhing of them all, no man was compellable to ſupport *any* religion, and yet there never was any want of religion, or of good morals, in that province.

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All the ſtates of America are now in the ſame ſituation. They have no national religion at all. In that reſpect every man does what is right in his own eyes, and all perſons without diſtinction are admiſſible to every civil office; and yet they ſee no cauſe to apprehend that ruin and deſtruction which Mr. Madan forbodes will be the conſequence of the diſſolution of our national eſtabliſhment. Since their emancipation from the power of this country, the North Americans are imitating our civil inſtitutions, and and adopting a form of government ſimilar to our excellent one; but they wiſely avoid every thing like the *eccleſiaſtical part* of it, as the clergy always affect to ſpeak.

If theſe eſtabliſhments of chriſtianity were ſo *neceſſary* as Mr. Madan repreſents, the American States could not have ſubſiſted a ſingle year without one; and in the late unſettled ſtate of their civil government, when the eccleſiaſtical was certainly, as Mr. Madan himſelf would ſay, moſt wanted, they found no want of it at all. They have now done without one, in a ſtate independent of England, fourteen years, and for any thing that appears, they may do as well fourſcore, or four hundred, years. Now, why may not Engliſhmen on this ſide the Atlantic do without a *national church* (this appendage, or rather excreſcence, of our conſtitution) as well as Engliſhmen on the other ſide of it?

To ſubdue your minds to a diſpoſition to ſubmit to every thing that you find *eſtabliſhed*, and to oppoſe all *innovation*, Mr. Madan brings into one view, p. 14, all the paſſages in which the apoſtles urged ſubmiſſion to the Roman government in their time; without conſidering the peculiar ſituation of chriſtians at that time, and without conſidering that his application of thoſe maxims would inculcate ſubmiſſion to *every* goverment, however tyrannical, that happens to be once *eſtabliſhed*, be it heathen, mahometan, or popiſh. If the *powers that be are ordained of God*, was not Henry VIII. guilty of a great ſin in reſiſting them, for certainly he found the power of the pope as fully eſtabliſhed in this country as

the

the preſent hierarchy now is. According to this, it would be a ſin to reſiſt any government. But is not this ſtrange doctrine. Would it not even ſhake your belief in the Bible itſelf, if you ſaw that this ſlaviſh and abſurd tenet was really contained in it? It might do very well as a Bible for the Turks, but ought to be rejected with indignation by Engliſhmen.

Another text that Mr. Madan quotes as an argument againſt all innovation, is Proverbs xxiv. 21. *My ſon, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.* But would not this have been a much better text for cardinal Pole before the Reformation, than for Mr. Madan after it. He means by this quotation, and on the authority of Solomon, to give you a bad impreſſion of us Diſſenters, as a people that are continually *reſtleſs* and *given to change*, whom nothing reaſonable can ſatisfy; whoſe demands therefore are never to be regarded, but who are always to be kept under by proper authority. But what are all the changes that *we* porpoſe, compared to that great change in conſequence of which Mr. Madan now enjoys the valuable livings of Ipſtock and of St. Philip's, in Birmingham, beſides being chaplain to the king, and having by that means, no doubt, ſome much more conſiderable preferment in proſpect. If he really condemn *all* changes, he muſt condemn that of the reformation from popery; and then he ought to reſign his livings, and become a *catholic Diſſenter*, with a ſalary of twenty or thirty pounds a year. If he did not mean to condemn *all* changes, why did he quote this text without explanation or limitation; and if *ſome* changes be proper and lawful, why may not *others*?

If Mr. Madan expounds the ſcriptures in the uſual courſe of his Sermons no better than he has done in this, by putting together a number of texts in an arbitrary manner, without any regard to their connexion, he may lead you into many ſtrange miſtakes. He may tell you from the ſcriptures, that *there is no God*, for that ſentence is found there; and

after

after giving an account of Judas *hanging himſelf*, he may add from the ſcriptures, *Go thou and do likewiſe*. Without ſome comment, or at leaſt the context (or what goes before and after any particular ſentence) the mere words of ſcripture give you no ſolid inſtruction, or ſafe direction. Though the apoſtle does ſay, as Mr. Madan quotes p. 14, *Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power reſiſteth the ordinance of God and they that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation*, Mr. Madan himſelf, in another ſituation, would no more preach obedience to *all powers that be*, than he would adviſe you to hang yourſelves. Do you think that he would approve of obedience to Oliver Cromwell; and would he ſay that it would have been unlawful to depoſe him? and yet his power was at one time, to all appearance, as well *eſtabliſhed* as that of the church of England at this day, of the permanency of which, I own, that I now begin to have ſome doubts.

If Mr. Madan mean that we ſhould explain the text above mentioned by what immediately follows, and which in this caſe he has honeſtly ſubjoined, *For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil*, and that this power is *the miniſter of God for good*, allowing us to judge for ourſelves, whether it be good or not, his argument for ſubmiſſion is impertinent; becauſe we ſhall then be required to ſubmit to no government but what we ourſelves are convinced is a *good one*, and therefore ſhall be at full liberty to reſiſt whatever we conceive to be a *bad* government, or ſuch as we ſee does not anſwer its proper end. This Mr. Madan could not but have ſeen; and therefore, if he have any meaning at all, that is to his own purpoſe, he muſt mean that all governments that we any where find actually eſtabliſhed are good ones.

I am,

My good friends and neighbours,

Your humble ſervant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

P. S. Having, in the two laſt Letters, conſidered *eſtabliſhments in general*, I ſhall in my next, take a view of that of the *church of England*, ſo highly, and for ſuch good reaſons, admired by Mr. Madan, whoſe *Alma mater* it is. After this I ſhall proceed to give an account of thoſe turbulent *ſectaries*, and that *dæmon of hereſy*, which ſeems to have terrified him ſo much, and by which he prays, p. 24, that *our unrivalled conſtitution may not be contaminated*. And perhaps, in his animadverſions on this part of my correſpondence, he may be pleaſed to explain in what manner it is that dæmons do *contaminate* ſuch things, as well as how they may be *ſhaken by diſſenſion*. In the latter, I ſuppoſe he alludes to ſome danger from *within*, and in the former to ſomething from *without*.

Perhaps, on a nearer view than Mr. Madan has yet had the courage to take, this *dæmon* may not appear quite ſo hideous and frightful a thing as, from a diſtant view, it appears to him. However I will ſhow you what this dæmon really is, and then you may judge for yourſelves. The ſight ſhall not coſt you much, nor will the exhibition take up much of your time. As to myſelf, I ſhall attend you with pleaſure, and as I ſhall go very near it, you will ſee that it does not actually *devour* all that come in its way. If you fear being *contaminated* by it, at firſt only look at it, and be careful not to touch it. But really you will find this fame *hereſy*, to be as gentle, clean, and harmleſs a thing, as a young lamb, and no frightful, *contaminating dæmon* at all.

You may ſafely venture to approach, and ſtroke it. It has neither the fierceneſs of the *tyger*, nor the filthineſs of the *hog*; if it was this *unclean animal* that gave Mr. Madan the idea of its *contaminating* property; if it was ſuggeſted to him by the account of the *unclean ſpirits* in the hiſtory of our Saviour and the apoſtles, let him, and the reſt of the clergy, prove their genuine *ſucceſſion from the apoſtles* by *caſting them out*. According to Mr. Madan, the number of *perſons poſſeſſed* is of late much increaſed, and therefore, *if they can do any thing* (Mark ix. 22.) in the buſineſs, they

ſhould

ſhould exert themſelves, and that *ſoon*. As to myſelf, Mr. Madan, I imagine, will conclude that I have within me not leſs than a *legion* of theſe unclean ſpirits, *cum juſto equitatu* (he will underſtand me, and in his next Sermon explain it to you) But let him, and his brother exorciſts, take care leſt, by proceeding incautiouſly in this buſineſs, the poſſeſſed ſhould cry out, as in Acts xix. 15. *Jeſus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye*; and thus ſome miſchief ſhould ariſe to themſelves, and their ſyſtem, in conſequence of the attempt.

This day, I obſerve Mr. Madan is to publiſh *one final reply* to theſe *Letters*, including, no doubt, theſe which he has not yet ſeen, and thoſe which I have not yet written, as well as the former. As I do not pretend, to ſuch a gift of *ſecond ſight*, I muſt wait till I have an opportunity of ſeeing his performance; and as I find by his ſecond advertiſement, that it is to be a Letter addreſſed to *myſelf*, you may depend upon my reading it, and giving you all the information I can concerning it. Having begun this correſpondence, I do not mean to cloſe it very ſoon. I have been *ſlow to ſpeak*, but having long forborne, now that I am urged to it, by Mr. Burn and Mr. Madan, I ſhall not ſtop till, as Pope ſays,

——I've pour'd out all myſelf, as plain
As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne.

FAIR-HILL,
March 25, 1790.

Errors

Errors in the two former Numbers.

Number I. *p.* 13, *line* 20. A few, but not many, Scotch Preſbyterians, men of deſperate fortunes, did join the Pretender. Of the Engliſh Diſſenters, I believe, there was not one that took his part. In the firſt rebellion, Mr. Wood, the diſſenting miniſter at Chowbent in Lancaſhire, took the field himſelf at the head of his congregation. In the ſecond the members of my former congregation at Leeds were regularly exerciſed, and prepared to march. One of my uncles, who had been a captain in the army, was an officer. When the rebellions were ſuppreſſed, theſe friends of the family upon the throne (*unqueſtionably Republicans*, as Mr. Madan, who was not then born, ſays they were) were graciouſly *pardoned* for what they had done.

In caſe of a third rebellion, I myſelf would undertake to raiſe a company of young men in my preſent congregation, able and willing to defend his preſent majeſty, though he might not be ſo ready to pardon us for ſo doing. It is not the *man*, but the *king*, and the preſent reigning family, as an eſſential part of the conſtitution, for which we ſhould fight.

Page 17 *and* 23. On recollection, I ſuſpect that it may not be true that the biſhops voted againſt the Act of toleration. I have not at preſent any authorities to conſult.

Number II. *p.* 4, *l.* 8, For *Afterwards* read *Before this.*

P. 12, *towards the bottom*:—I have been informed that the junior-council at Nottingham have changed their firſt deſign, and are proſecuting their Mayor on the Corporation Act, and not on the Teſt Act.

Theſe, and any other inaccuracies that may be pointed out to me, will be corrected in a new edition of theſe Letters, when the whole plan of them ſhall be completed.

FAMILIAR LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS OF BIRMINGHAM,

IN

REFUTATION OF SEVERAL CHARGES,

ADVANCED AGAINST

THE DISSENTERS,

BY THE REV. MR. MADAN, RECTOR OF ST. PHILIP's,

IN

HIS SERMON,

ENTITLED,

'The principal Claims of the Diſſenters conſidered.'

Preached at St. Philip's Church, on Sunday, February 14, 1790.

PART IV.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S.

To ſpeak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, ſhewing all meekneſs unto all men. TITUS iii. 2.

MR. MADAN'S TEXT.

Ne ſævi Magne Sacerdos. VIRGIL.

BIRMINGHAM,

PRINTED BY J. THOMPSON;

AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD LONDON.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

FAMILIAR LETTERS, &c.

LETTER VII.

My generous Townſmen and Neighbours,

AS I promiſed you the beſt account that I could give you of *Mr. Madan's Letter to me*, and you will preſume that before this time I muſt have peruſed it, you will naturally expect to know my opinion of it; and I will tell you in a few words. It is a very angry one, intended rather to hurt me, than to inſtruct you; and after all, as I ſhall clearly ſhew you, is nothing to his proper purpoſe, which was the vindication of himſelf from the moſt injurious and unjuſt aſperſions of a large body of worthy men and good citizens.

He was charged with repreſenting the principles of the Diſſenters as *inimical to government*, and therefore, as unfit to be truſted in any place of profit, or power, even at the nomination of the crown itſelf; and he has neither retracted, nor ſufficiently vindicated, his accuſation. He has hardly ſo much as noticed, or hinted at, thoſe of my arguments in vindication of myſelf and my brethren, which it behoved him moſt of all to have particularly replied to; ſo that he had much better have written nothing at all.

To judge from the tenor of the Letter itſelf, Mr. Madan's object in it was the ſame with that of Biſhop Horſley, and Mr. Burn, viz. to diſcredit me, and throw an odium upon my character, that you might not think it worth your while to look into any of my writings, or regard any thing that I might ſay. And that is certainly the ſhorteſt way with me, and the moſt effectual, next to *hanging me up*, to which Mr. Madan alludes in his Note p. 47, and collecting and burning all the copies of my publications,

which might prove a troubleſome, expenſive, and uncertain buſineſs.

As I have been much uſed to ſuch charges as Mr. Madan brings againſt me, and ſometimes amuſe myſelf with them; and as they appear to moſt advantage when *brought together*, and *properly diſpoſed*, I have collected the different parts that Mr. Madan has given of his delineation of my character, that you may ſee *at once* what kind of perſon it is that is addreſſing you, and be upon your guard accordingly. If Mr. Madan had done the ſame, it would have better anſwered his purpoſe, which was that of deterring you from reading my publications; but being a young writer, he might not be ſufficiently aware of the effect of ſentiments properly *concentrated*. Behold then, my friends, and neighbours, who it is that, according to Mr. Madan, writes theſe Letters.

I am infected, p. 1, with a *cacoethes ſcribendi*, or an incurable itch of writing. "Controverſy," p. 34, "is neceſ-"ſary to my ſupport, if not to my exiſtence" (and yet I was near forty before I wrote any controverſy at all) "I am "perpetually immerſed, and floundering, in the troubled "waves of controverſy*." I deal in "low witticiſms," p. 38. I am actuated by "a blameable and blind impetuo-"ſity," p. 41. Notwithſtanding my "artful miſrepreſen-"tations and virulent invectives," p. 41. I am "a paſ-"ſionate and diſappointed aſſailant," p. 39. I am "an "evaſive Proteus," p. 17. I deal in "unjuſt invectives, "and unfounded aſſertions," p. 37. My "blindneſs is "wilful," p. 27. My "perverſions artful," p. 23. I am even "ſkilled in the art of miſrepreſentation," p. 5, ſo that I might be able to teach this art to others. I have recourſe to "the deliberate miſrepreſentation† of an old and ſubtle

* If there be any thing of a *ſtifling* nature in theſe muddy waters of controverſy, it is a miracle that I ſurvive ſo long as I have done. I fancy Mr. Madan ſuppoſes that I have the nature of a *fiſh*, or at leaſt that of a *frog*, or perhaps he would ſay, a *water ſerpent*.

† Biſhop Horſley not only calls *me* a wilful liar, but alſo the great Origen, the moſt eminent chriſtian in all the early ages, becauſe his account of things does not correſpond to his views of them. He ſays, in a manner as ſolemn

" polemic, whoſe only ſettled principle is that of litigation," p. 39, and to complete the whole, the motive that actuates me is nothing leſs than " malevolenec," p. 35. The reſult of all this is, that my " cenſure is innocent calumny," p. 38. Such is my obſtinacy, that I " never acknow- " ledged a ſingle miſtake," p. 38 ; and yet he deſcribes me, p. 47, as " an avowed wanderer in points of the firſt con- " ſequence, where uncertainty is at preſent dreadful, and " where error would in future be fatal* ;" quoting what I have ſaid of my frequent change of opinion, and having *no fixed creed*, in my Letter to Dr. Price.

As Mr. Madan ſays, in his *Sermon*, p. 9, that " few will " ſay it was written with an uncharitable and unchriſtian temper†," as well as that what he delivered was from " the " ſettled principles and conviction of his heart," he would no doubt, ſay the ſame concerning his account of me in this *Letter*. You ſee, therefore, who it is you have to do with, and if you read any farther, it is at your peril. You have fair warning both from Mr. Madan and myſelf. Well may he ſay, p. 34, that I throw out " unhandſome and unne- " ceſſary ſarcaſms againſt characters at leaſt as reſpectable as

ſolemn as that which Mr. Madan adopts, to make you believe that the Diſſenters in general are rebels and hypocrites, that he would not take either my evidence, or that of Origen, upon our oath. To call their adverſaries *wilful liars* ſeems to be a clerical faſhion. But do not you, my good neighbours, imitate your ſpiritual guides in *this*.

* In my laſt Number only I acknowledged four errors in the preceding, and all who are acquainted with my writings (which Mr. Madan is not) well know that no writer has more frankly acknowledged ſo many. How can I " wander from one opinion to another," with which Mr. Madan himſelf charges me, without virtually at leaſt owning the opinion that I abandon to be an error. The *fatal error* that Mr. Madan here ſpeaks of muſt be my diſbelief of the doctrine of the trinity, the neceſſary conſequence of which, according to the Athanaſian creed is, that I muſt without doubt periſh everlaſtingly. But the ſcriptures ſay that hereafter all will receive according to their *works* not their *opinions*.

† This reminds me of what is reported of the old duke of Marlborough, who ſaid, that whatever faults he had, his enemies could not charge him with *ambition*, or *avarice*. The ducheſs (who knew him much better than he knew himſelf) ſaid ſhe was obliged to bite her lips when ſhe heard him.

" my

" my own, and which I moſt illiberally introduce into my " Letters." For if this picture be a juſt one, and if I *do* throw out ſarcaſms againſt *any perſon*, it muſt be a character much more reſpectable than my own. For being poſſeſſed of ſuch *powers* as he aſcribes to me, and actuated by ſuch *malevolence*, I can be no other than *Satan* himſelf. A Biſhop in Ireland, as I have been credibly informed, very ſeriouſly maintained that I was *antichriſt*, and that my experiments on air were thoſe *prodigies* that he was to exhibit. But even *this* is ſhort of the tremendous idea that Mr. Madan exhibits of me.

You will naturally aſk what foundation Mr. Madan can have for charges of ſo ſerious a nature as theſe, eſpecially that of *wilful miſrepreſentation*, and perverſion of his meaning. He gives two inſtances of this, and I will mention them both, that you may judge how far ſo very heavy a charge is ſupported. When I quoted him as ſaying that " the Diſ- " ſenters were under no diſability, which could poſſibly be " avoided, conſiſtently with our ſecurity," I added, as thinking it to be his meaning, that of the *church*, whereas it appears that he referred to the *ſtate*, or the *civil government*. But how did the inſecurity to *the ſtate* ariſe, but through *the church*, which he ſuppoſed to be connected with it? Now will this authorize the violent exclamations quoted above? It is not in fact any miſrepreſentation at all. And certainly it is far from having the appearance of a *wilful* one.

The other inſtance is my inadvertently ſpeaking of the corporation act as following the teſt act, whereas it preceded it, when it was of no conſequence at all to my argument which of them was the firſt, But ſo high an opinion does Mr. Madan affect to have of my *knowledge*, and ſo little of my *integrity*, that he ſays, p. 26, " I feel it juſtly " due to your acknowledged learning, to confeſs, that when " I ſee any blindneſs in any point of hiſtory, I much ſuſpect " it to be wilful." This miſtake I was ſoon ſenſible of, and corrected, as you will ſee in the third part of theſe Letters.

Now the moſt notorious liar muſt have ſome *motive* for violating truth; and in this caſe there could not be any at all.

all. Mr. Madan often ſays that, "when I conſider what I "have written I ſhall be aſhamed of it;" and I hope that *he* will be aſhamed of *this*. I am very far from ſuppoſing him to be ſo deſtitute of all moral principle as he makes me to be; but, like many others, he has been miſled by popular opinions concerning my principles and character; opinions which, if he would read my writings himſelf, even my controverſial ones, he would find to be void of all foundation.

Mr. Madan charges me with want of reſpect to *himſelf*; when all that I have ſaid by way of diſparagement of him, amounts to nothing more than that he is a young man, ignorant of ſome points of hiſtory; and even in this he might perceive I was not ſerious; meaning only that he had been *inattentive* to it, and did not properly apply it. I alſo hinted that his imagination was a little diſturbed. But this applies to the whole body of the clergy; and what leſs can any man, in his ſober ſenſes, think of thoſe who really apprehend the ſafety of the church and ſtate to be in imminent danger from the repeal of the Corporation and Teſt Acts, which I clearly demonſtrated to you, could not do any harm to either? Yet Mr. Madan can ſay (Sermon p. 11) that this repeal would be "opening the conſtitution to the interference of the "Diſſenters, and eventually truſting to their moderation;" as if upon this every thing would be in our power, though the king, the miniſters of ſtate, the nobility, and almoſt all the members of parliament, ſhould continue to be of the eſtabliſhment. Can this be any thing leſs than inſanity?

As to Mr. Madan himſelf, I could give him ſufficient evidence of the real reſpect with which I once conſidered *him*. But this I own, is much changed ſince the publication of his Sermon; though he is by no means ſunk ſo low in my eſteem as I am in his, when he ſays, p. 35, that in viewing me, he "experiences a mixed ſentiment of pity "and contempt, pity for ſuch a degradation of my talents, "and contempt for ſuch a proof of my malevolence." Now I conſider him as a perſon of *ability*, not at all inferior to what he is pleaſed to aſcribe to me, and of a naturally ingenu-

ous and good diſpoſition, but miſerably miſled by high church prejudices; in conſequence of which he has haſtily taken up a buſineſs to which neither *his* talents, nor thoſe of any other man, are equal. I have, however, ſo good an opinion of his *candour*, as to be perſuaded that after ſome time, he will ſee theſe matters in a very different light from what he does at preſent; and if, when he is perfectly cool, he would read even my controverſial writings, he would entertain a very different opinion both of *them*, and of *myſelf*, than he does at preſent.

Notwithſtanding the frightful picture Mr. Madan gives of me, he ſays, p. 6, that he can "meet me, except in the "light of cavil and diſputation, not only with civility, but "with pleaſure, and good will." I hope, therefore, that he was not perfectly ſerious in what he has ſaid of me. For if I knew any perſon of ſuch a character as he deſcribes mine to be, I ſhould certainly never wiſh to meet him at all. I ſhould always ſuſpect him of ſome miſchievous intention or other, and be continually in dread of his power. After ſuch a picture as he has drawn, I ſhould naturally look for the horns, the tail, and the cloven foot, as proper accompaniments of the character. Nay I ſhould not chuſe to have much to do with any perſon who conſidered *me* in ſuch a light; conſcious as I am to myſelf, that my character and conduct are very different from what he conceives them to be.

LETTER VIII.

Of Mr. Madan's Apology for his Treatment of the Diſſenters.

My Friends and Neighbours,

MR. Madan is willing, in the ſecond publication, to ſoften, in ſome meaſure, his cenſure of the *Diſſenters in general*, as perſons of a turbulent diſpoſition, ſeditious, republicans, and king killers, by repeatedly aſſerting that he only meant the *chief leaders* of the party. But the expreſſions that he particularly quotes, as moſt liable to ſuſpicion, are thoſe of the *Reſolutions of the diſtrict meeting at Leiceſter*, which were by no means the language of the *heads of a party*, but were approved, and unanimouſly adopted, by a very large body of Diſſenters, of all denominations, in no leſs than nine contiguous counties; which *Reſolutions* he has annexed at large to his Sermon, by which he certainly did not mean to give any favourable idea of them.

Now theſe Reſolutions are exactly ſimilar to thoſe that were paſſed in all other parts of England; ſo that any cenſure of *them*, muſt neceſſarily apply to the great body of Diſſenters, and not to a few only. We do not thank Mr. Madan for excepting *ſome individuals* among the Diſſenters from his virulent accuſation of the whole body, becauſe it is well known there are no large bodies of men without ſome well diſpoſed individuals; and I appeal to the whole town, and to Mr. Madan's own hearers, if the impreſſion left by his Sermon was not in the higheſt degree unfavourable to *the whole body of Diſſenters*, and therefore whether it was not deſerving (conſidering his juſtly reſpected character) of particular and indignant notice. However, his charges appeared to me ſo very abſurd, that I treated them, as you have ſeen, rather with ridicule, than with anger; whereas though

though his Letter abounds with *wit*, yet *anger* evidently predominates in it.

Upon the whole, I cannot help comparing Mr. Madan's conduct to that of a boy*, who ſhould wantonly thruſt his ſtick into a hive of quiet and induſtrious bees, and then think to walk off unhurt; not recollecting, that, inoffenſive as they naturally are, they have *ſtings*, and are capable of reſentment. Had he caught a few ſingle bees by themſelves, he might have cruſhed them without alarming the reſt, and without any riſk to himſelf at all. He does not however deny but that he alluded to *myſelf* in particular, as one of thoſe more *violent Diſſenters*, on whom his cenſure was *intended* to fall; and if he really took me to be that *malicious Being* above deſcribed, he ſhould not have trodden upon my *cloven foot*, or have kicked me ſo near to my tail, without remembering that I had *horns*, and he had none.

Beſides, who are the violent Diſſenters that Mr. Madan refers to, and how far can he be juſtified in aſcribing their particular ſentiments to the whole body of Diſſenters? My own ſentiments, eſpecially my religious ones, which are all that are concerned in this caſe, have been no where ſo unpopular as among the Diſſenters themſelves; and what Mr. Madan will not ſuſpect, but what I know to be true, they gave the greateſt offence to thoſe who are commonly diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of *rational Diſſenters*; and it is only of late that the caſe has begun to be a little otherwiſe. At one time there were not more than two or three pulpits in England that I conſidered as open to me.

* Mr. Madan will perhaps conſtrue this as a reflection upon him, on account of his *youth*, ſince he thinks, p. 20, that I meant ſomething *contemptuous* by mentioning that circumſtance both with reſpect to Mr. Pitt, and himſelf before; whereas any impartial reader will ſee that I had no idea of the kind with reſpect to either of them. It is true, however, that I do not ſee any thing ſo *tranſcendant* in the *abilities* of Mr. Pitt, as Mr. Madan does, p. 20, nor have I at preſent the favourable opinion that I once was willing to entertain of his *heart*, becauſe I do not think that his *conduct* in his high office ſufficiently correſponds to his *profeſſions* before he arrived at it.

With reſpect to my political publications, my late *Letter to Mr. Pitt* greatly diſpleaſed the Diſſenters in general; and many of my own particular friends, thoſe whom I have reaſon to value the moſt, have not yet forgiven it. But my whole hiſtory ſhews that it has not been my cuſtom to court *popularity*, even among the Diſſenters, much leſs to aſpire to the emoluments, as Mr. Madan inſinuates, p. 22, of the eſtabliſhed church. If I did, my conduct has been ill adapted to gain my end.

As to the late application to parliament, I had nothing to do in ſuggeſting it, and very little in promoting it. Nay, apprized of my extreme unpopularity, it is well known to all my friends, that I purpoſely kept out of the way, leſt my preſence ſhould impede the buſineſs. All that I ever thought of doing was delivering the *Sermon* on the 5th of November laſt. And a diſcourſe on ſome topic relating to *public liberty* being always expected on that day, and the uſual topics of that kind being pretty much exhauſted among us, I thought I might as well make choice of *that* ſubject, as any other; and when I ſat down to write, I was far from having any thoughts of publiſhing the diſcourſe.

If Mr. Madan would have proved my real principles to be dangerous, he ſhould have conſidered what I have written without a view to controverſy, on the ſubject of *government*, eſpecially my *Lectures on the Study of Hiſtory and General Policy*, which I particularly pointed out to him. There he will find the principles that I taught when I was tutor at Warrington, thoſe that are now taught at the new college in Hackney, at Northampton, and as I am informed in the colleges in North America. If Mr. Madan had looked into thoſe Lectures, which, from the circumſtances above mentioned, he may ſuppoſe bid fair to contain ſuch *principles of government* as will generally be taught to young men of fortune among us, he would have found them indeed to be favourable to *liberty*, but unfavourable to *republicaniſm*; and all my acquaintance know that I am even a zealous friend of a *limited monarchy*, ſuch as our conſtitution is.

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In a converſation I had laſt ſummer, at which Dr. Jackſon, Dean of Chriſt Church, Oxford, was preſent, I maintained the importance of *three* different powers in every well balanced ſtate, with ſo much earneſtneſs, that, with great good humour, he and the reſt of the company rallied me as being a *trinitarian in politics*, though an *unitarian in religion*. On this queſtion I always took the part of Mr. Adams againſt Dr. Franklin, who was a favourer of a republican government; though even *he* was ſo well ſatisfied with our own, that I (who knew him well, if any man did) know that he would have ſacrificed every thing for the preſervation of it.

I ſcruple not to ſay that I think the *power of the crown* to be at preſent much too great; but this does not affect my idea of the real uſe of *a king*. I am an enemy to the *hierarchy*, not only as *antichriſtian*, but as a great means of giving the crown the undue influence it now has; in conſequence of which the court can carry almoſt whatever meaſures they pleaſe.

While the clergy had a leaning to the pretender, which continued till there were no more hopes of his ſucceeding to the crown, they ſerved as a balance to the power of the crown; but, now they are wholly with it, and the influence of the Diſſenters, which in all the late reigns was intirely with the court, has begun, in conſequence of a ſeries of unprovoked diſcouragements, to turn the other way, though ſtill it is not generally ſo.

I am ſorry to find Mr. Madan approving of the *Extracts* that were made from the *Preface to my Letters to Mr. Burn*, and that "he thinks himſelf and the public, p. 12. indebted "to the ingenious editor of them, as forming a neat ſyllabus "of my conſtitutional principles;" and ſpeaking ironically, "a ſummary, yet full, evidence of my many public merits." For by keeping out of ſight every thing that ſhewed I had nothing in view beſides *public diſcuſſion*, that editor, and his abettors, muſt have meant to inſinuate that I intended ſomething of a more violent kind. For what is there alarming

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in merely advancing any *opinion*, and the *reaſons* on which it is founded. Are not the clergy at full liberty to anſwer thoſe reaſons? Was it worth their while to trouble every member of the houſe of Commons, and all the biſhops, with an account of my wiſhing only to *reaſon* with them on the ſubject? Will the clergy ſeriouſly ſay that they are afraid of my *arguments*, and as much terrified at *them*, as they would be at *real gunpowder?*

Mr. Madan ridicules, p. 16, our attempt to plead a precedent for "our diſtrict meetings, our national meetings, "and our common funds, from that admired ſyſtem of that "peaceable ſet of men, the Quakers; but I believe," he ſays, "every body will ſmile at an example ſo totally inap-"plicable to your preſent ſubject. Your farther reading, "it is true, may perhaps induce the next change of your "principles to coincide with thoſe of that reſpectable fra-"ternity, and I heartily wiſh it may."

Now, ſhould not Mr. Madan have ſhewn in what reſpects our conduct has differed from that of the Quakers? But it is much eaſier to *aſſert*, and to *caluminate*, than to *prove* a charge. I have clearly ſhewn you, that our conduct does not at all differ from that of the Quakers, and our public papers ſhew that from the firſt we had their conduct in view. In a letter of Mr. Walker's, which was circulated with a view to promote our late proceedings, copies of which were printed here, and ſent to all parts of England, is the following paragraph, "The example of the Quakers, "of whoſe union this plan is almoſt an exact counterpart, is "a complete anſwer to every objection that can be made to "this intention, and this mode, of conſolidating the com-"munion of Diſſenters through the kingdom." The compliment Mr. Madan pays the Quakers, is evidently meant to be at our expence, which is nothing but a poor *artifice*, to engage them on his ſide, againſt us. But I know that body of men better than he does. I know that they wiſh well to our application, and I do not deſpair of their openly joining us when it ſhall be renewed.

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I am particularly ſorry to perceive that Mr. Madan is not aſhamed of retailing the low ſcurrility of Swift. "Your "virulent abuſe," he ſays, p. 35, "of the writings and me- "mory of Dean Swift, cannot fail to return with increaſed "force upon yourſelf; and his character is above your "reach." Now I ſaid nothing about his *writings* and *memory* in general, but of his *illiberal prejudices* againſt the Diſſenters; and that I am not ſingular in treating *this* part of his character with contempt, Mr. Madan may ſee in the laſt Monthly Review, which I now have in my hands, in which the following cenſure is paſſed on the late republication of the Dean's Tracts on the repeal of the Teſt Act, p. 343. "Dean Swift's hatred to the Diſſenters is well known; and "all calm and diſpaſſionate men are of opinion, that his "hatred urged him even to groſs defamation. We are "ſorry, therefore, to ſee the preſent controverſy on the Teſt "Act *thickened* by throwing into the cauldron any of his "illiberality and virulence."

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

Of Mr. Madan's farther Arguments in Support of his Poſition that the Principles of the Diſſenters are unqueſtionably republican, and of the Deciſion of the Houſe of Commons againſt the Diſſenters.

My Townſmen and Neighbours,

AS Mr. Madan promiſed *one final reply* to all theſe Letters, you would naturally expect that it would have been an *effectual one*, ſo as to leave nothing of any conſequence to add to it. Now in order to this he ſhould not have contented himſelf with looking for the principles of modern Diſſenters

Diſſenters in thoſe of the time of Charles I. but have examined our *late conduct*, and the principles that we *now teach*. For admitting that we did put to death one king in the middle of the laſt century, we may have repented of it before the concluſion of this. Now it does not appear that we made any attempt upon the life of William III. queen Ann, George I. or II. or of his preſent majeſty. Nay, the Diſſenters entered into no conſpiracy againſt Charles II. or JamesII. And as their loyalty to the princes of the houſe of Hanover ſtands unimpeached, it ought in reaſon to be concluded that, in their proceedings againſt Charles I. they did not conſider him merely as a *king*; for then they would have had the ſame diſlike to *all* kings. Mr. Madan therefore, in his *final reply*, ſhould by all means have anſwered this argument, which I very particularly urged againſt his maxim that *the principles of the Preſbyterians* (meaning thoſe of the Diſſenters in general) *are unqueſtionably republican.*

He ought alſo to have replied to my argument from the Scots (who always were, and ſtill are, Preſbyterians) never having ſhewn any predilection for a republican form of government, but having always had kings, and a proper attachment to them. But though he intimates, p. 26, that he *could* have explained this remarkable fact conſiſtently with his accuſation of *all* Preſbyterians being of courſe republicans, he leaves you to gueſs at what he might ſay; and I am ſure it is not in my power to divine what it could be. Warburton may give what reaſons he pleaſes for allowing the Scots to retain their preſbyterian form of church government; but the attempt to force epiſcopacy upon them in the time of Charles II. proves that it was a meaſure of *neceſſity*, not of *choice*.

But though he ſays nothing in reply to my objections to this doctrine, he ſtill maintains his own, viz. that the principles of Preſbyterians, both in the antient and modern ſenſe of the word, are unqueſtionably republican; and in proof of it he now alleges, p. 26, the caſe of Holland, Geneva, and other foreign Proteſtants, whoſe principles he ſuppoſes to be

preſbyterian,

preſbyterian, and whoſe governments are republican. But in the ſame manner he might prove that the principles of the Catholics are republican. For in Switzerland there are as many popiſh cantons as proteſtant ones. Alſo, the religious principles of Holland and Geneva are materially different from thoſe of the Diſſenters of this country: If they be Preſbyterians, the French Proteſtants are ſo too, and can Mr. Madan ſhew that *they* ever diſcovered a leaning towards a republican government?

Even the Lutheran church may be ſaid to be preſbyterian, ſince its conſtitution approaches much nearer to this ſyſtem, than to that of the church of England. The circumſtance that particularly diſtinguiſhes Preſbyterians from the members of the church of England, is that the latter are governed by *dioceſan biſhops*. But among no foreign proteſtants are there any biſhops with ſuch powers as thoſe in England. They do not there rank with the nobility, ſo as to have ſeats in the ſupreme council of the nation; and they have no ſuch *temporal courts* (very improperly called *ſpiritual*) as, to your ſorrow and coſt, you often find they have here. The Lutherans, however, though in fact Preſbyterians, compared with Epiſcopalians in this country, are not republicans; but have always acquieſced in the government of the empire, and have ſubmitted to the laws of it, as much as the catholic ſubjects.

On the whole, Mr. Madan's favourite idea of the natural connection between the principles of *religion* and thoſe of *civil government*, on which he charges the Diſſenters with being republicans, is altogether unſupported by any facts in hiſtory. He might juſt as well infer that becauſe his next neighbour was both a preſbyterian and a button maker, that therefore all preſbyterians were button makers, or all button makers preſbyterians; as becauſe the people of Geneva, or any other particular ſtate, are republicans and preſbyterians, that therefore all other preſbyterians are republicans. As, if he walk through this town he will find button makers of all religions, ſo if he ſtep beyond the territory of Geneva,

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he will find republics compoſed of zealous Catholics; and Mr. Madan himſelf will hardly ſay that the principles of the Catholics are *unqueſtionably republican*.

Mr. Madan, a little conſcious perhaps that his arguments from *preſent facts*, and *paſt hiſtory*, ſuch as we uſually call *arguments a poſteriori*, have but ill ſerved his purpoſe, has recourſe to a new, and very curious argument *a priori*; inferring *facts* from *principles*; and in the following manner he argues that republican principles *muſt* at this day exiſt among Diſſenters, notwithſtanding all the changes which he allows to have taken place among us ſince the time of Charles I. "*Parties*," he ſays, p. 24, "change every day, but *principles* are a long-"lived generation. Where then," ſays he, p. 28, "are the "principles of ſome of the leading characters who ſunk again "into the general maſs when the Reſtoration happily took "place." I aſk him the ſame queſtion. Let him find them if he can. Only I will ſay they are not among the Diſſenters. Where are the principles of the violent Anabaptiſts in Germany? I do not believe that they exiſt *any where*; and yet according to Mr. Madan they muſt be ſomewhere. Beſides, if theſe republican principles do exiſt among the Diſſenters, they cannot affect the great body of them; for the king killers in the time of Charles I. were very few.

But if there muſt be republican and king killing principles among the Diſſenters, muſt there not, for the ſame reaſon, be the principles of *paſſive obedience and non reſiſtance* among the clergy; ſince they did exiſt, and were far more general among them, and in a very late period too, than republican principles ever were among the Diſſenters? And, in conſequence of this, are not the clergy as much to be dreaded, as friends to *arbitrary power*, as the Diſſenters are for being too great friends to the *liberties of the people*.

With reſpect to the *Teſt and Corporation Acts*, Mr. Madan thinks his reaſoning againſt the repeal of them, on his principle of the Diſſenters being republicans, and therefore unfit to be truſted with power, to be confirmed by the late deciſion of the Houſe of Commons in his favour. Of this he makes ſo great boaſt, by repeating it ſo often, and with ſuch an air

of triumph, that I fancy he begins to think it the beſt argument that he has to produce. "It would be idle," he ſays, p. 5, "impertinent, and ridiculous, to refute my arguments "from his pen, after ſo deliberate a deciſion for the third "time, from the collective wiſdom of our preſent repreſenta-"tives in parliament." He conſiders the propriety of what he had urged, p. 9, as "eſtabliſhed by the late moſt decided "majority of the houſe of Commons." But had this been the *three fold cord*, of all the three eſtates of parliament, as in this caſe it is only *a ſingle one*, there are many examples of ſuch cords being broken. For how often have acts of parliament been repealed?

I wonder however, that recent facts ſhould not have taught Mr. Madan how little force there is in his arguments from acts of parliament, or rather the deciſion of one or both houſes. Did not the high church party boaſt as much as they now do of the great ſtrength of their cauſe, when the houſe of lords, at the inſtigation of the biſhops, rejected our petition to be excuſed from ſubſcribing to your articles of faith? As they afterwards relented, whether they changed their opinion or not (and indeed it is moſt likely that *that* remained the very ſame) this may be the caſe again. Many circumſtances may occur to induce the members of the houſe of Commons, even without their thinking any more about the matter, to vote exactly contrary to what they have lately done; and then what will become of Mr. Madan's great argument? His cauſe will then want its chief ſupport. Whereas my reaſoning, as you ſee, is altogether independent of acts of parliament; and therefore I am not at all leſs confident of its ſtrength on account of the late deciſion. For the members of the houſe of commons in this caſe were not influenced by *reaſon*. Let *her* voice be once heard, as in time it cannot fail to be, and their oppoſition to our juſt claims will ceaſe.

As Mr. Madan lays much ſtreſs on arguments from *authority*, I will inform him of one with which he is probably unacquainted. The Diſſenters have not only been defeated in the *houſe of Commons*, but in the *Royal Society* alſo.

A friend

A friend of mine was lately recommended to this philiſophical Society by myſelf, Mr. Kirwan, Mr. Watt, Dr. Crawford, Dr. Watſon, Dr. Price, and Dr. Kippis. His knowledge of philoſophy and chemiſtry far exceeds mine, and I entertained no doubt but that a certificate *ſo ſigned* could not fail to be ſucceſsful. But, as my information goes, "Biſhop "Horſley, the king's two librarians, and many church dig- "nitaries came to vote againſt him," and the votes of two thirds of the company preſent being neceſſary to an election, he was rejected. Unfortunately, he was known to be not only a friend of *mine*, but to have been active in the meaſures to procure a repeal of the Teſt and Corporation Acts, and was ſent to London as a delegate from the Diſſenters in a northern county. Had my own election been depending, it would certainly have met with the ſame fate. I will venture to ſay that, had the clergy looked through the three kingdoms, they could not have found an abler man to put an affront upon. It therefore ſhews, what is much to Mr. Madan's purpoſe, the ſuperiority of thoſe who oppoſe the repeal of the Acts in queſtion over thoſe who deſire the repeal, not only in the *houſe of Commons*, but even in the *Royal Society*.

On the idea of the claims of the Diſſenters being *unjuſt*, and their principles unfavourable to the conſtitution of this country, Mr. Madan now juſtifies the very harſh epithets he gave us in his Sermon, and becauſe "in "the ſcriptures themſelves," as he ſays, p. 10, "many "ſtrong accuſations are alleged againſt evil doers." He adds that they are "expreſſions of reproof, which are warranted "by truth, and required by neceſſity." Now, my good neighbours, they who are called *evil doers* in the ſcriptures, are *wicked men*, or perſons of immoral lives, and not men of unſound political opinions. Whether, therefore, Mr. Madan can be juſtified in applying the ſame, or ſimilar language, in caſes ſo very different as theſe are, do you judge. Every hiſtory will ſhew you that there have been very many virtuous men engaged in actual rebellions, from miſtaken principles of policy. But ſurely, though theſe perſons are

juſtly condemned by men in this world, they are not liable to the wrath of God in the next, which will be the certain doom of all thoſe whom the ſcriptures call *evil doers?* It is happy for us Diſſenters that we are not at the mercy of Mr. Madan, either in this world, or the next. He may ſentence all Diſſenters, and all Unitarians, to the fate of evil doers hereafter; but I hope he will not find any *power* to put his ſentence in execution.

Upon the ſubject of the Teſt and Corporation Acts, Mr. Madan makes a long quotation from biſhop Horſley's pamphlet, recommending it to my particular notice. Now I have read it, as I have done many other things of this ſame biſhop, with much more attention than I have found they deſerve; and I ſee nothing worth notice in it. All that Mr. Madan has quoted from it goes upon the idea that the Diſſenters muſt be enemies to the ſtate, becauſe they are enemies to the church. But we are ſo far from allowing this conſequence, that we are rather diſpoſed to maintain the direct contrary; thinking the principles of the church to be in oppoſition to thoſe of the ſtate, as a free and equal government, and giving the crown a very undue degree of power; a ſubject on which I ſhall probably enlarge in the courſe of theſe Letters.

Biſhop Horſley ſhould not have written about the Diſſenters till he had known them better than he does, and Mr. Madan ſhould not have copied after him, till he had read what myſelf, and others, have replied to him. He quotes the biſhop (Sermon, p. 28) as "having fully proved "that the genuine Calviniſts among our modern Diſſenters "are very few." Now, if he had read what Mr. Palmer of Hackney, and myſelf, have repeatedly replied to him, he muſt have been ſatisfied that no aſſertion was ever more unfounded. This town of Birmingham is an abundant refutation of his confident aſſertion.

There is no place, I believe, in England where the Diſſenters who are *not Calviniſts*, are ſo numerous in proportion to thoſe who *are* as here. But in this place there are but two congregations that are not profeſſedly calviniſtical, beſides a very

very ſmall one of General Baptiſts; whereas there are three congregations of Independants, or proper Calviniſts, two of them numerous, and a fourth is forming; and there are two of Particular, or Calviniſtic Baptiſts, one of them very numerous. In moſt other places, and eſpecially in London, the Calviniſts exceed all the other Diſſenters in a much greater proportion. It is, I believe, leſſening. But great bodies of men do not change their opinions ſo ſoon as the biſhop's argument required; and hence his obſtinacy in not admitting ſo evident a fact.

Mr. Madan, as well as the clergy in general, take it for granted, that I am *ſmarting*, as he ſays (Letter, p. 5) under the laſh of this biſhop. This is only a proof that he has not read my laſt *Defences of Unitarianiſm*. There he would ſee that this biſhop's blows, ſo far from being thoſe of a *whip*, or any thing that can give *pain*, are only thoſe of a *feather*, that tickles and amuſes me, and that it would gratify me, and all Unitarians, very much to have a few more of them.

If a general pretend to have gained a *victory*, you never take his word for it. You aſk for the *trophies*, the *ſlain*, and the *priſoners*. Now it is evident that there has been a very great increaſe of Unitarians ſince the commencement of our controverſy, and that it has been in a great meaſure occaſioned by it. I may venture to ſay that it has been thirty fold. It is an increaſe acknowledged by all, and greatly lamented by the Trinitarians. Now is not this more the ſign of his *defeat* than of his *victory?*

I will venture to ſay that every publication on the part of the Trinitarians, has been the occaſion of the dimunition of their party. An anonymous correſpondent tells me that, "by accident, nay, he ſays, from the ſingularity of the cir-"cumſtance, by the direction of God, he met with my "*Letters to Mr. Burn*, and that if it had not been for them, "he might have been glorifying God the Son, and God "the Holy Ghoſt, which he now thinks not to be founded "on reaſon, or ſcripture." Many others, I have reaſon to

think, are under the ſame obligation to Mr. Burn, and many, I doubt not, will have reaſon to thank Mr. Madan, and theſe Letters of mine, to which his *Sermon* has given occaſion.

In this very critical ſtate of things, would it not be wiſdom in the biſhops, the natural guardians of the church and its doctrines, to interpoſe, and not ſuffer young men to engage in this important controverſy, leſt they ſhould do more harm than good to the cauſe they wiſh to ſupport. Injudicious friends often do more harm than open enemies.

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

Of the Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution of Ireland.

My Friends and Neighbours,

THE pretences for *civil eſtabliſhmeuts of religion*, which were the ſubject of my late Letters, have not always been the ſame, but have changed with the times. For if a thing *muſt* be ſupported, and one buttreſs is found to give way, another muſt be provided to ſupply its place. Now till of late years it was always maintained to be the duty of the civil magiſtrate to ſupport the *cauſe of God*, and *of truth*, without any regard to the *numbers* that might be for or againſt it. But as *all* religions were maintained to be *true*, and therefore this maxim would furniſh a pretext for continual hoſtility (the partiſans of each pretending to fight in the cauſe of God) it has of late years been held by all the friends of theſe eſtabliſhments, that they are to be ſupported not becauſe they are founded on *truth*, but becauſe they favour the religion of *the majority* of the inhabitants of any country. Conſequently, they acknowledge that, if a majority

majority of the inhabitants of any country were Mahometans, Catholics, or Preſbyterians, *theſe* ought to be the religions favoured by the ſtate; and that, in order to preſerve peace, all the reſt ſhould be *tolerated*; meaning that as many privileges ſhould be granted them, as ſhall be neceſſary to keep them quiet.

Now it ſo happened that the eſtabliſhment of Ireland was ſettled before this *new principle* was thought of. At leaſt, no regard was then paid to it. For the great majority of the people of Ireland are Catholics, and yet the eſtabliſhment is that of the church of England, the members of which are not ſo numerous as even the Preſbyterians. To defend the eſtabliſhment of Ireland, therefore, on the new principle of the eſtabliſhed religion being that of the *majority*, is evidently impoſſible, and yet the old principle of eſtabliſhments has been long given up; and as the attention of the clergy has not been called to the ſubject, they are utterly at a loſs what to ſay about it. Since, however, I have ſtarted the ſubject, Mr. Madan ſeems to have thought it incumbent upon him to ſay *ſomething*; but, perhaps, not having exactly ſettled his own judgment, it is not eaſy to develope his meaning.

"Should you be diſpoſed," he ſays, p. 34, "to argue "that by the ſame mode of reaſoning, the number of Roman "Catholics ſhould eſtabliſh popery in Ireland (becauſe the "majority are Roman Catholics) you muſt firſt prove the "pope to be a member of ſome proteſtant ſect of chriſtians." From the turn of this curious ſentence, it ſhould ſeem to be intended for *wit*, or *humour*; and, as ſuch, it may for any thing that I know, have great merit; but what I am looking for is *argument*, and of this, as Mr. Madan has not thought fit to explain himſelf, I do not find the faintest trace. And as this is unfortunately his *final reply*, we muſt gueſs at his deep meaning as well as we can. For my part, I muſt own myſelf to be intirely at a loſs. I cannot even imagine on what principle the eſtabliſhment in Ireland ſhould be proteſtant when the people are Catholics; but ſuch as would make it

equally proper that the eſtabliſhed religion of Scotland ſhould be epiſcopalian, when the people are Preſbyterians; or that the eſtabliſhment in England ſhould be preſbyterian, when the majority of the people are Epiſcopalians.

If there be any *act of parliament* (for ſuch things it ſeems are *reaſons* with Mr. Madan) which makes it wrong to eſtabliſh the popiſh religion in Ireland, it muſt be unjuſt, and ought to be repealed, as well as every thing elſe that is *violent* and *tyrannical*. For what is an act of tyranny, but that which is forced upon a people againſt their will? And were the people of Ireland fairly polled upon the ſubject of eſtabliſhing ſome ſyſtem of religion, the votes would certainly be in favour of the catholic, and not that of the church of England.

Suppoſe a catholic prince, the late pretender for example, ſhould by an armed force expel the preſent reigning family, and in all the forms of an act of parliament, eſtabliſh the popiſh religion in this country, ſhould we not pronounce this proceeding to be tyrannical; and ſuch as ought to be reſiſted, whenever we ſhould have the power of doing it? Such, therefore, muſt be the caſe of the people of Ireland. But when any ſyſtem is *eſtabliſhed*, and a particular ſet of men derive advantage from it; be it ever ſo contrary to reaſon and common ſenſe, it will by them be ſupported, as this is by Mr. Madan. There can hardly be a more evident caſe of the kind than this of the church eſtabliſhment of Ireland being proteſtant, when the great bulk of the people are Catholics.

If the people of Ireland were fairly at liberty to determine for themſelves, as all men, and all nations, naturally wiſh, and have a natural right, to do, they would never ſubmit to maintain at the public expence a ſyſtem of religion that was profeſſed by not more than one in ten of the inhabitants. But if not more than one in an hundred were Epiſcopalians, the preſent ſyſtem would no doubt be continued; and for the ſame reaſon, whatever it be, this might be the caſe even if there was *not one*. For in a great number of the pariſhes

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in Ireland there is not a ſingle proteſtant; and yet all the tythes go to the maintenance of the clergy of the church of England, who have nothing to do for it. This is a crying enormity, and public injuſtice; and it is poorly palliated by Mr. Madan's ſaying with a ſneer, that it cannot be remedied till the pope become a member of ſome proteſtant communion. It is adding mockery and inſult to oppreſſion.

As Mr. Madan's reaſoning is ſo manifeſtly inconcluſive on this and all other ſubjects which he has touched upon, or glanced at (for he has done nothing more in his Sermon or Letter) and I have ſo clearly pointed out the inconcluſiveneſs of his reaſoning, you may wiſh to know upon what *principle* he makes himſelf ſo eaſy about it. It is, p. 36, becauſe I have charged the apoſtle Paul with inconcluſive reaſoning; as if it was enough for him to be put upon a level with Paul, even in what is faulty in him. But whether I be right or wrong in thinking that Paul may have ſometimes reaſoned inconcluſively (and he himſelf does not pretend to be exempt from error) will this be any juſtification of Mr. Madan? May I not be wrong in cenſuring Paul, and yet right in cenſuring the rector of St. Philip's. He will hardly pretend to inſpiration. If he do, he ſhould give ſome proof of it. This however he threw out not by way of wit or *argument*, but merely *artifice*, to prejudice you againſt my reaſoning, as if becauſe it has no force againſt St. Paul, it can have none againſt himſelf.

Another ſtroke of artifice in Mr. Madan is his inſinuating, p. 18, that I have a low opinion of your underſtandings. But if that had been the caſe, ſhould I have thought of addreſſing theſe *Letters* to you, ſo as to ſubmit to your judgment important articles of *religion* and of *government*, with reſpect to which I and Mr. Madan hold different opinions, making you the umpire between us? I cannot conſider the *aggregate body* of any town, Birmingham or London, as perſons of learning or education; but they have not, on that account, the leſs good ſenſe, or the leſs capacity of judging on ſuch ſubjects as I am bringing before you.

You

Your judgment and good ſenſe were never ſo much called in queſtion as by your clergy, when they made the violent oppoſition that you have heard of to the introduction of my publications on theological ſubjects into the public library in this town, when the funds of it were amply ſufficient for the purpoſe. The pretence was that they would not have your minds diſturbed with theſe ſubjects; as if you were not qualified to read and judge for yourſelves, and at the ſame time preſerve your good temper with reſpect to thoſe who ſhould think differently from you. This, however, was only a pretence, and a very ſhallow one. They wiſh you not to read or think on theſe ſubjects at all, leſt you ſhould entertain opinions different from thoſe which are eſtabliſhed, and which it is their intereſt to keep up; and in conſequence of this, leſt their *ſyſtem*, and *themſelves*, ſhould eventually be diſturbed, and not *you*. But I truſt that, in defiance of them, you will ſhew the free ſpirit of Engliſhmen, and that you will think and act for yourſelves, following *truth* wherever you find it, and reſpecting it alike, whether it be diſcovered in a church, or in a conventicle.

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

Of Controverſy.

My good Friends,

MR. Madan ſays, p. 45, that I have "diſgraced my "talents" which he is pleaſed to call (whether ironically or not I cannot tell) "*ſuperior*," to unworthy and diſgraceful purpoſes, and he deſires me to "remember the "higher point of view in which my profeſſion as *a miniſter* "has placed me."

With reſpect to *this*, let Mr. Madan inquire of my congregation. They will inform him, that I never trouble them with diſcourſes of a political nature, except on a fifth of November, and then never ſay any thing that tends

tends to exaſperate them againſt their neighbours of the eſtabliſhment, but to make all due allowance for the prejudices of their education; whereas Mr. Madan's Sermon, which has been obſerved to inculcate no chriſtian virtue, was delivered on a *Sunday*, which ought to have been devoted to better purpoſes.

The greateſt part of my theological publications are of a ſerious nature, enforcing the evdience and doctrines of chriſtianity; and thoſe of which Mr. Madan ſpeaks with abhorrence and contempt, viz. my *controverſal writings* (with which he is evidently very little acquainted) are in my own opinion, calculated to aſſert and vindicate very important chriſtian truths; and I do not know that I can employ whatever talents I may have to a better purpoſe. With what *ſucceſs*, or with what *ſpirit*, I have written, I do not appeal to Mr. Madan, but to *you*.

Beſides, is the perſon who is wantonly attacked always to be charged with a *love of controverſy*, when he defends himſelf, and his writings, and not rather the perſon who wantonly attacks him. Mr. Burn, for example, charges me with *undervaluing*, and *rejecting*, the *teſtimony of the apoſtles concerning the perſon of Chriſt*; when all that I have written on the ſubject, has been to ſupport what I take to be their teſtimony. He alſo charges my theological principles in general, as "big "with all miſchief." This he does in the place where I live, and before the congregation to which I preach. Am I then to be blamed if I repel with the indignation that it deſerves, ſuch unmerited and unprovoked calumny?

Beſides, my controverſial writings bear but a ſmall proportion to all my publications. I do not think all my controverſial writings, properly ſo called, that is, thoſe in which I I reply to *particular perſons*, would make ſo many ſheets as I have printed this very year of works of a different nature. But controverſy, as far as appears, makes the whole of Mr. Burn's and Mr. Madan's publications. Theirs alſo are both on the *offenſive* ſide, whereas mine are wholly *defenſive*. Indeed, there is nothing of any conſequence that I have

written

written in this way but what was as unpremeditated, as my replies to Mr. Burn and Mr. Madan.

What has contributed the moſt to get me the character of a *controverſial writer*, is what I have written in defence of myſelf, when attacked from a great variety of quarters, on account of my *Diſquiſitions concerning Matter and Spirit*, and my *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*. I ſhould never have written againſt biſhop Horſley, any more than againſt Mr. Burn, if he had not firſt written againſt me. I have not anſwered to one challenge in ten that has been given me. If I do *flounder*, as Mr. Madan ſays, in the muddy waters of controverſy, he and Mr. Burn are among thoſe who firſt tempted me in, by plunging in before me, and keeping me company as long as it was convenient to them, and yet they now inſult me for it.

But I do not deſire to make any apology for what is called *controverſy*. For, how offenſive ſoever the term may be to thoſe whoſe principles ſuffer by it, it means nothing more than *public diſcuſſion*, without which no queſtion of conſequence can be thoroughly, and generally, underſtood. The apoſtle Paul was a great controverſial writer, and ſo was the meek St. John; all his epiſtles being written againſt the Gnoſtics.

Beſides, how can I eſcape blame in this caſe? If I make no reply, I am ſaid to be *unable* to make any; and if I do, I am *fond of controverſy*; ſo that my ſituation reſembles that of the old man and the aſs. Do what I will, I muſt diſpleaſe ſome. Mr. Madan, you ſee, challenges me to anſwer a pamphlet written by biſhop Horſley, about the Teſt Act, which he ſpeaks highly of, but which I think undeſerving of any particular notice. On the whole, I have thought it moſt manly, and moſt favourable to the cauſe of truth, after avowing any opinion of importance, to diſcuſs it publicly with ſuch perſons as appeared to me the beſt qualified to do the contrary opinion juſtice, and to continue it till nothing of conſequence remained to be ſaid on either ſide, that the public might judge for themſelves on which

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ſide the truth lay. This I think is far better than, like Mr. Madan, to throw my dagger, and then run away from the perſon offended by it. However, it is by no means true that I have always had the *laſt word*. My rule has been to ceaſe to write when I had nothing material to add to what I had advanced before. I could name many perſons to whoſe laſt publications I never made any reply.

Mr. Madan, you ſee, binds himſelf to make no reply. But as biſhop Horſley made the ſame imprudent declaration, and afterwards violated it, ſo may *he*; and if he ſee it to be in his power to reply with *effect*, I doubt not but we ſhall have ſome *more laſt words of Richard Baxter*. Do you think that if he, or Mr. Burn, irritated as they evidently are, had any hope, either of ſilencing me, or of convincing you that I *ought* to be ſilent, they would not do it? Has either of them ſpared any thing to injure me in your opinion? You well know they have not; and it is not probable that their diſpoſition is changed in this reſpect.

I am, &c.

Of the Principles of the Church of England.

LETTER XII.

My Townſmen and Neighbours,

ONE of the preceding Letters that I took the liberty to addreſs to you, related to *church eſtabliſhments in general*, in which I ſhewed you that in forming them the civil magiſtrate went beyond the bounds of his proper province, and incroached upon that of Chriſt, and of God himſelf, to whom alone we are accountable for our religious principles and moral conduct; and yet men, without any authority from God, have preſumed to ſay what we ſhall *believe*, and what we ſhall *do*, in *matters of religion*; and they have enforced their decrees with heavy pains and penalties, inſomuch

much that, without being guilty of any *civil offence* whatever, a man ſhall be liable to have his goods confiſcated, be diſabled from ſuing in any court of law or equity, being guardian of any child, being executor or adminiſtrator to a will, be incapable of any legacy or deed of gift, bearing any office, civil, military, or eccleſiaſtical, and being ſent to priſon, as at preſent in this country of ours; and in others they ſhall be liable to be put to death in the moſt cruel manner, merely for avowing an *opinion* different from what other men have thought proper to decree to be *true*.

Now, many of you being engaged in other neceſſary purſuits, and not having had your attention drawn to theſe ſubjects, may know very little about church eſtabliſhments in general, or of your own in particular, as little as many perſons, for want of travelling or reading, may know of the country in which they live. You very piouſly, as you have been educated, go to church, and ſay your prayers on Sundays, and you follow your ſeveral occupations diligently and honeſtly in the courſe of the week, but many of you have little leiſure to think about any thing farther. There is however, much more implied in being *a good churchman* than you may think of; as there are many things in the laws of our country, which are binding upon all the ſubjects, whether they have taken care to acquaint themſelves with them or not. For it is preſumed that men who have the uſe of their reaſon, will make uſe of it in whatever particularly *concerns them*.

Now if this be the caſe with reſpect to the civil laws of your country, it muſt be the ſame with reſpect to the eccleſiaſtical laws of it. Beſides, when you go to church, you do not go merely to hear what another perſon ſays, which a ſtranger might do without bearing any part in the ſervice, or being reſponſible for the propriety of it; but you go to pray yourſelves; and in your prayers you ſpeak *to God*, and *concerning God*; and therefore ſhould deliver nothing but what you have well conſidered, and think proper to be ſaid to him, and concerning him. Conſequently, if, upon that due conſideration which you ought to give to

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ſo ſerious a ſubject, you cannot deliberately aſſent to any thing that, in the forms of your public worſhip, you are required to ſay, you ought not to ſay it at all. If what all the congregation there join in be any thing not *true in itſelf*, and eſpecially *falſe with reſpect to God*, and *unworthy of him*, you ought not to give your countenance and ſanction to it, even by your preſence. As you would not ſo much as join in a common ſong, or bear your part in the chorus, without approving of it, much leſs ſhould you bear your part in a common prayer to Almighty God, without the moſt hearty approbation of the ſentiments contained in it.

It is, moreover, taken for granted, that all members of any particular ſociety hold the diſtinguiſhing principles of that ſociety. Otherwiſe they are unworthy and improper members of it. You, therefore, who profeſs to be of the church of England, alſo profeſs to hold the principles of it, and eſpecially the belief of all its *articles*, which the founders of your eſtabliſhment have reduced to *thirty-nine*. Theſe the preamble to them ſays, were agreed upon "for "avoiding diverſities of opinions, and for eſtabliſhng con- "ſent touching true religion." And the royal proclamation prefixed to them requires not the *clergy* only, but "all "his majeſty's loving ſubjects, to continue in the uniform "profeſſion of them;" it prohibits "the leaſt difference "from them," and will not "endure any varying, or de- "parting from them in the leaſt degree."

With reſpect to the interpretation of theſe articles, this declaration ſays, that "they are to be taken in the true, "uſual, and literal meaning of the words;" and that "you "are not to put your own ſenſe or comment upon the "meaning of any article, but to take them in their literal "and grammatical ſenſe." Now as theſe articles are dictated in very plain Engliſh, the literal and grammatical ſenſe of which is very eaſy to be underſtood, you will ſee, by conſidering them, what the real doctrine of the church of England is, and what the faith of all the true members of it ought to be.

Farther

Farther, as this declaration ſays that theſe articles "which "contain the true doctrine of the Church of England," are "agreeable to God's word," and you have this word of God, your Bibles, in your hands, you may judge for yourſelves, whether this be true or not. By this rule you are to *try all things and then hold faſt that which is good.*

Your twentieth article ſays that "though the church "has power to decree rites and ceremonies, and has autho- "rity in controverſies of faith," yet "it is not lawful for "the church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's "written word, and that it ought not to inforce any thing "to be believed for neceſſity of ſalvation, beſides what is "contained in the ſame." If, then, any of theſe articles ſhould contain what you cannot but ſee to be contrary to the word of God, as well as to your own plain ſenſe and reaſon; and if they make any other *terms of ſalvation*, beſides ſuch as are made to be ſo in the word of God, your church will ſtand ſelf-condemned. It appeals to the ſcriptures; and by the ſcriptures muſt all its articles, and every clauſe in them, be tried.

Now let us attend to a few of theſe articles, and conſider whether the doctrines they contain, according to the plain, uſual, and grammatical ſenſe of the words in which they are expreſſed, be agreeable to ſcripture, or not. Pleaſe to have a copy of the articles open before you, as I now have, and as you are acquainted with your Bibles, to which the compilers of theſe articles appeal, compare them together, and then judge honeſtly for yourſelves. I ſhall for the preſent paſs over what relates to the doctrines of the *trinity*, and the *divinity of Chriſt*, becauſe I reſerve the conſideration of them to a ſeparate Letter, and ſhall content myſelf in this with mentioning a few other things, though, as you will ſee, of very great importance, if what relates to the *favour of God*, and *final happineſs*, be ſo.

Your ninth article ſays that "Original ſin is the fault "and corruption of the nature of every man,"——and "therefore in every perſon born into this world, it deſerveth "God's

"God's wrath and damnation?" In conſequence of this, the tenth article ſays, that "man cannot turn, and prepare "himſelf, by his own natural ſtrength, and good works, to "faith, and calling upon God: therefore we have no power "to do good works, pleaſant, and acceptable to God, with- "out the grace of God by Chriſt preventing us, that we may "have a good will, and working with us, when we have "that good will." And your thirteenth article ſays that "works done before the grace of Chriſt, and the inſpiration "of his ſpirit, are not pleaſant to God; for as much as they "ſpring not of faith in Jeſus Chriſt, neither do they make "men meet to receive grace —— Yea rather, for that they "are not done as God hath willed and commanded them "to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of ſin."

Now, is it not evident, from the plain ſenſe of theſe articles, that, on account of *a ſinful nature*, which every man ſince Adam neceſſarily brings into the world with him, it is not in his power to do any thing but ſin. He cannot even rightly *call upon God*, or *pray*, till he receives ſomething that is here called *the grace of God*, and the *inſpiration of his Spirit*, which muſt neceſſarily be a thing independent of himſelf, and only what God is pleaſed to impart to him; all that he can do being of the nature of *ſin*, and offenſive to God.

But how is this doctrine agreeable to the ſcriptures, or to common ſenſe. All the prophets, who ſpeak by authority from God, plainly ſuppoſe that thoſe to whom they addreſs themſelves have a natural power of turning to God, and of doing what is pleaſing to him. What is the ſubſtance of all their exhortations but *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die.* Now, would not this be a cruel mocking, and tantalizing of men, if they had no power at all of turning *to* God, but only a power of turning *from* him. What would you ſay to any man who ſhall exhort one whom he plainly ſaw to have neither legs nor crutches, to get up and run; and is God more unreaſonable than man? Such, however, is

the doctrine of your articles, in the plain and obvious ſenſe of the words.

You will ſay *who then are to be ſaved*, and *how are they to be ſaved*, ſince nothing that any man can do of himſelf can contribute to his ſalvation, by making him acceptable to God. Your ſeventeenth article tells you all this very plainly, when it informs you concerning the doctrine of *predeſtination*, and *election* as follows: "Predeſtination to "life is the everlaſting purpoſe of God, whereby, before the "foundations of the world were laid, he hath conſtantly "decreed by his council, ſecret to us, to deliver from curſe "and damnation thoſe whom he hath choſen in Chriſt out "of mankind, and to bring them by Chriſt to everlaſting "ſalvation, as veſſels made to honour. Wherefore, they "which be endued with ſo excellent a benefit of God be "called according to God's purpoſe, by his ſpirit working "in due ſeaſon; they through grace obey the calling; they "be juſtified freely: they be made ſons of God by adoption; "they be made like the image of his only begotten ſon Jeſus "Chriſt; they walk religiouſly in good works, and at length "by God's mercy, they attain to everlaſting felicity."

You ſee then that, according to this article, no man can be ſaved but they who have been by God *fore-ordained* to it, and that the means of ſaving men is their being "called "according to God's purpoſe by his ſpirit working in due "ſeaſon." It therefore does not depend upon *men*, but upon *God* only, who worketh in them *when*, and *how* he pleaſes. It alſo plainly follows from this, that all thoſe whom God does not predeſtinate to eternal life, and whom he does not call by his ſpirit, muſt miſs of eternal life; the conſequence of which, according to your articles, is, that they muſt ſuffer everlaſting puniſhment, and through no fault of their own, but on account of ſuch a *nature* as they brought into the world with them, and which, of courſe, they could not help. This doctrine is ſaid, in the ſame article, to be "full of ſweet, pleaſant, and unſpeakable com-

"fort,

"fort, to godly perſons, ſuch as feel in themſelves the "working of the Spirit of Chriſt." But what muſt it be to thoſe who feel no ſuch workings, and who have no means of procuring them?

Thus, my good friends, has your church decreed concerning this very important buſineſs of future happineſs, and the way to it. But not ſo Almighty God. Every page in the ſcriptures declares the very contrary doctrine, viz. that God loveth the righteous, and that the condemnation of ſinners is not from *him*, but from *themſelves*. Predeſtination and election is, no doubt mentioned in the ſcriptures, but then it means nothing more, as many divines of your own church have clearly proved, than the good pleaſure of God in granting the knowledge of the goſpel to ſome nations and not to others, at any particular time. And we are expreſsly taught by the apoſtle Paul, that whether it be more or leſs light that any part of the human race enjoy, they ſhall be judged by that light, ſo that no more will be expected of any man than God has given him power to perform, which is agreeable to natural reaſon and equity. Rom. ii. 14. *When the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe, having not the law, are a law unto themſelves, which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing one another.* Yet the very contrary of this rational and apoſtolical doctrine is expreſſed in your eighteenth article, which ſays "they are to be had accurſed, who preſume to ſay that every "man ſhall be ſaved by the law or ſect that he profeſſes, ſo "that he be diligent to frame his life according to the law, "and the light of nature." According to this you ſee that all thoſe who have nothing more than the *light of nature*, or who have never heard of chriſtianity, muſt periſh everlaſtingly. For ſo harſh a cenſure as this thoſe who framed the articles have thought proper to give the following reaſon. "For holy ſcripture doth ſet out unto us only the name of "Jeſus Chriſt, whereby men muſt be ſaved." This is taken

from Acts iv. 12. which, if you will conſult, you will clearly ſee that the *ſalvation* there ſpoken of is not ſalvation *to eternal life*, but only ſalvation, or *deliverance*, *from bodily diſeaſes*, ſuch as that of the lame man, who begged at the gate of the temple; and the plain meaning of the paſſage is, that no ſuch miracle as that by which he was cured could be performed by any power, but that which was poſſeſſed firſt by Chriſt, and afterwards by the apoſtles; the truth of which cannot be queſtioned, becauſe it was a power derived from God, who, as he firſt eſtabliſhed the courſe of nature, can alone controul it.

Your church ſays, article nineteenth, "as the church of "Jeruſalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred, ſo alſo "the church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living "and manner of ceremonies, but alſo in matters of faith." Now I think that, after what we have been conſidering, we muſt ſay that the church of England alſo hath erred, in matters of faith, as well as the churches of Jeruſalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome. Indeed, what privilege has your church to exempt her from error, more than thoſe churches, whoſe faith ſhe takes upon her to condemn? If *antiquity* be pleaded for the purity of faith, the preference cannot be given to the church of England, which roſe the lateſt of them all, as it was formed by Diſſenters from the church of Rome; and if, on the contrary, *novelty* be any advantage (thoſe who come after others, being able to ſee farther than thoſe who went before them) we who now diſſent from the church of England, have the ſame advantage over *her*, that ſhe had over the church of Rome. If the founders of your church would prove their infallibility, they muſt work miracles; but this is what they do not pretend to, though the church of Rome does. But even miracles cannot prove that to be true which to reaſon and common ſenſe appears evidently falſe; and ſuch are the doctrines above mentioned. Miracles can only prove that to be true which in its own nature *may* be ſo, and not that which is *abſurd* and *contradictory* either to reaſon, or the

ſcriptures.

ſcriptures. For we muſt take it for granted that God will not contradict himſelf.

I do not mean to trouble you with an account of every thing that is evidently contradictory to reaſon and the ſcriptures in your articles, but I could not help dwelling a little upon ſuch as appear to me to be of particular importance, and ſuch you muſt agree with me are thoſe above mentioned. They are not, however, errors peculiar to your church, but errors of former ages, as I have abundantly ſhewn in my *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*, which if you look into, you will ſee at what time they were introduced, and by what ſteps they prevailed. But having been received many centuries, it could not be ſuppoſed that the reformers from popery would be able to detect them all at once. Luther, and his noble cotemporaries, did a great deal, and we have reaſon to bleſs God for their labours. But, inſtead of acquieſcing in *them*, we ſhould feel ourſelves animated with the ſame ſpirit, and go on to finiſh what they only began.

That ſome things, which are at leaſt very like to what you yourſelves would now call *popiſh doctrines*, are retained in the articles and ſervices of the church of England, a ſlight degree of reflection will convince you. One of the capital doctrines of the church of Rome is that of the change made of the bread and wine in the Lord's ſupper into *the real body and blood of Chriſt*. The reformers ſaw that this was an *abſurdity*, and not countenanced either by reaſon or the genuine ſenſe of ſcripture; but ſuch were the prejudices of the common people, and their own too, in favour of a long received doctrine, that the framers of your articles and liturgy have retained too much of it. In the Lord's ſupper your twenty-ninth article ſays, "the body of Chriſt is given, taken, and "eaten, after an heavenly and ſpiritual manner;" and in your catechiſm you *are* taught to ſay that "the body and "blood of Chriſt are verily and indeed taken and received "by the faithful in the Lord's ſupper."

Now if this language have any meaning at all, it cannot differ much from that of the Catholics; for *they* do not ſay

that this bread and wine has the *taſte* of fleſh and blood. In common ſenſe, theſe elements can be nothing more than a *ſign*, *emblem*, or *memorial*, of the body of Chriſt, and not the *body itſelf*, which therefore, *verily and indeed*, it is not eaten, at all, not even in a heavenly, or ſpiritual, or any other conceivable, manner.

To the receiving of theſe elements ſuch a virtue is aſcribed by your church as no experience will juſtify. For in the twenty-fifth article they are ſaid to be "ſure witneſſes, and "effectual ſigns, of grace, and God's good-will towards us, "by the which he doth work inviſibly in us, and does not "only quicken, but alſo ſtrengthen, and confirm our faith in "him." Now there is nothing in the ſcriptures to authorize our aſcribing ſo much to this, or to any other inſtitution. All that our Saviour ſaid upon the occaſion was, that we ſhould eat bread and drink wine *in remembrance of him*; and being inſtituted immediately after the celebration of the paſſover, which was appointed in commemoration of the deliverance of the Iſraelites from Egypt, there can be no doubt of its having the ſame ſimple and obvious meaning. It was deſigned to remind us of Chriſt, and of our obligations to him. There is no inviſible agency of God upon the mind, either expreſſed or implied, in either of the ſervices.

The ſuperſtition and abuſes of former times with reſpect to the ordinance of *baptiſm*, are alſo retained in the articles and offices of your church, from which they ought long ago to have been expunged. In your twenty-ſeventh article, baptiſm is ſaid to be "a ſign of regeneration, or the new "birth, whereby, as by an inſtrument, they that receive "baptiſm rightly are grafted into the church, the promiſes "of forgiveneſs of ſin, and of adoption to be the ſons of God "by the Holy Ghoſt, are viſibly ſigned and ſealed, faith is "confirmed, and grace increaſed, by virtue of prayer unto "God."

This is aſſerted concerning baptiſm univerſally. But how can it apply to the caſe of *infants*; and yet perſons who are baptized in their infancy, are made to ſay in your catechiſm, that by baptiſm they are "made members of Chriſt,

"children

"children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of "heaven." This is ſurely aſcribing a great deal too much to a mere *ceremony*, in which a child is intirely paſſive. Will not this doctrine fully authorize the ſuperſtition of the church of Rome, the prieſts of which communion often boaſt that, in heathen countries, they have privately, and unknown to their parents, baptized ſuch young children as they met with, and particularly thoſe that were upon the point of death, thinking thereby to ſecure their ſalvation.

Beſides, how does this doctrine of baptiſm making perſons "members of Chriſt, children of God, and inheritors "of the kingdom of heaven," agree with the doctrine of *predeſtination* above mentioned? Are all perſons who are regularly baptized of courſe predeſtinated to everlaſting life? Does the eternal decree of God depend upon the will of man; and yet, as if this was really the caſe, whenever you bury any perſon who has been baptized (and if they have not, you do not think them entitled to what you call *chriſtian burial*) the miniſter is made to "thank God that "it has pleaſed him to take to himſelf the ſoul of his dear "brother, or ſiſter," and the body is committed to the grave "in ſure and certain hopes of its reſurrection to eternal life." Though the deceaſed as been ever ſo notorious a bad liver, and even a deſpiſer of all religion, yet if he have been baptized, and have chriſtian burial, the ſame confidence is expreſſed of his future ſalvation. Surely, my friends, theſe things ought not ſo to be. Men can never become heirs of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven by mere baptiſm, nor do all who have your chriſtian burial go to heaven.

The popiſh prieſts, you know, pretend to a power of giving men *abſolution*, when they have confeſſed their ſins to them; which is certainly an uſurpation of the rights of Almighty God, who alone knows the hearts of men, and has the power of forgiving ſin; and yet this very offenſive part of popery is retained in your office for the viſitation of the ſick. For there the prieſt is directed to ſay to the ſick perſon,

perſon, who has profeſſed his belief of the apoſtle's creed, "Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath left power to his church "to abſolve all ſinners who truly repent and believe in him, "of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences. And by "his authority committed to me, I abſolve thee from all "thy ſins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and "of the Holy Ghoſt." If theſe words have any meaning at all, they muſt imply that ſomething relating to the forgiveneſs of ſins depends upon *the prieſt*. For if *repentance* alone was ſufficient, his abſolution could ſignify nothing.

That theſe things, and many others of a ſimilar nature, which I might point out to you, ſhould paſs uncorrected at the time of the Reformation, near three hundred years ago, is not to be wondered at. Thoſe reformers are not to be blamed for doing no more, but to be commended for doing *ſo much* as they did. But ſurely thoſe who came after them are to blamed, who have ſhut their own eyes, and have endeavoured to ſhut yours too, from that time to the preſent day; as if Luther and his brethren had been men divinely inſpired and exempt from all error; and as if all wiſdom was born and died with them; whereas they only ſet an example, which thoſe who came after them ought to have followed.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Of Subſcription to the Articles, &c. of the Church of England.

My Friends and Neighbours,

YOU will naturally ſay, If there be theſe ſtrange abſurdities in the articles and public ſervices of our church, why are not our biſhops and clergy ſenſible of them; and, as they are men of ſenſe and education, how can they, as we know they are required, *willingly* and *ex animo*, ſubſcribe to the truth of them. This is a queſtion that I cannot anſwer. You muſt apply to them yourſelves, and perhaps they may be able to give you ſatisfaction. However, when any man declares his unfeigned belief of any thing, I am not apt to queſtion his veracity, as Mr. Madan does mine. I have a much better opinion of him than he has of me. And if he can, in ſo peculiarly ſolemn a manner, declare his belief of the Diſſenters in general being diſaffected to government, and that their declarations of loyalty are not to be truſted; if this opinion of his be "the ſettled princi-"ple and conviction of his heart, as he hopes for mercy "from the God of truth," he muſt certainly have ſubſcribed the thirty-nine articles with the ſame ſerious conviction of their truth. For he muſt know that God is a witneſs to that *ſubſcription*, as well as to his compoſing, delivering, and printing his ſermon.

It is well known, however, that the generality of his brethren do not believe theſe articles, in that *ſtrict and grammatical ſenſe* in which their ſubſcription to them is required. They publicly preach, and even print, what is directly contrary to them. They will even be offended if you ſay that they are *Calviniſts*, though the diſtinguiſhing doctrines of calviniſm are no other than thoſe of *original ſin*, *predeſtination*, and other doctrines neceſſarily depending upon them, which I have ſhewn to be contained in the thirty-nine articles. This is ſo well known that the late Lord Chatham (who was a very different man from his ſon, our preſent

prime

prime miniſter, whoſe tranſcendant abilities are ſo much admired by Mr. Madan) in a celebrated ſpeech which he made in the houſe of Lords in favour of the Diſſenters, ſaid, "We have a popiſh liturgy, a calviniſtic creed, and an Ar-"minian clergy."

You will naturally ſay that, as your clergy do ſubſcribe theſe articles, it muſt be in ſome ſenſe or other. But as biſhop Burnet juſtly ſaid long ago, "the greater part ſub-"ſcribe without ever examining them, and others do it be-"cauſe they muſt do it, though they can hardly ſatisfy their "conſciences about ſome things in them." Indeed, my friends, your clergy are trained to this buſineſs of ſubſcription much too early, and before they are qualified to judge about it; but having done it once, and ſeeing others do the ſame every day, they come to make as light of it as too many perſons in trade do of a *cuſtomhouſe oath*, as if they thought that it implied no obligation at all. But in the very ſame manner thieves and pickpockets may be trained to *their* diſhoneſt practices, and follow them through life, without ever reflecting on the wickedneſs of them.

However, your clergy, having ſubſcribed to theſe articles (which they generally do without ever thinking about the matter) have ſometimes found it neceſſary to allege ſomething or other in juſtification of their conduct; and you will naturally have ſome curioſity to know what it is that they *can* ſay. Now, there have been no leſs than thirteen different reaſons aſſigned by your clergy for their ſubſcribing *willingly* and *ex animo*, to the literal truth of thoſe articles, which at the ſame time they openly profeſs not to believe at all. I ſhall not trouble you with *all* the excuſes, ſome of which exceed the ingenuity of a Jeſuit, but I will juſt mention a few, that you may have ſome idea how very clever your clergy are, and with what dexterity they can ſplit hairs.

Many ſay that they ſign theſe articles "as far as they "are agreeable to the word of God." But, if that had been ſufficient, why were the articles compoſed at all? Would it not have been ſufficient to require a ſubſcription to the *ſcriptures* themſelves? The ſubſcription to theſe articles,

articles, if it had any meaning at all, muſt be a ſolemn declaration, that they contain the true ſenſe of the ſcriptures.

Very many of your clergy have ſaid that they ſubſcribe the articles not as *articles of faith*, but as *articles of peace*, meaning, I ſuppoſe, that they will not publicly controvert them. But had this been the meaning of the compilers, they certainly would not have required a *ſubſcription* to them, but only a ſolemn *promiſe*, that they would not publicly impugn them. This ſubſcription to the articles as articles of peace, will give no peace to the mind of an honeſt man. The preface to the articles ſays that they were compiled "for avoiding diverſities of opinion, and for eſtabliſhing of conſent "touching true religion." But how does this kind of ſubſcription prevent *diverſity of opinion?* Many of your clergy not only hold, but publiſh, and earneſtly contend for, very different opinions, on the moſt important articles of religion.

Mr. Paley, archdeacon of Carliſle, maintains that any perſon may ſubſcribe the articles who does not belong to any of the three claſſes of men originally intended to be excluded from the church by them, viz. *Papiſts*, *Puritans*, and *Anabaptiſts*. Now, Mr. Paley's writings being in very high repute, and publicly taught to the youth at the Univerſities, this *new* idea of his concerning ſubſcription is very likely to become prevalent. But can you think that this was the idea of the compilers, or of the legiſlature, at the time when this ſubſcription was enjoined? If nobody was intended to be excluded from the church beſides *Papiſts*, *Puritans* and *Anabaptiſts*, would not the tenets of theſe people have been particularly marked? And why are a variety of articles inſerted to which they could all ſubſcribe. None of theſe three claſſes of men were *Socinians*, and therefore, according to Mr. Paley, *they* may ſafely ſubſcribe theſe articles; though the very firſt of them ſays that "in the unity "of the godhead there be three perſons, of one ſubſtance, "power and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy "Ghoſt." But ſhould not I, who diſbelieve this doctrine,

be

be a great raſcal, if I ſhould ſubſcribe it, in order to get preferment in your church?

Many perſons, I am informed, think themſelves juſtified in ſubſcribing the articles of the church of England though they do not believe them, becauſe it is well known to thoſe who receive their ſubſcriptions, that they do not, and therefore they ſay that they *deceive* nobody. But can you think that a *falſehood* is rendered innocent, by its being accompanied with *impudence?* What ſhould we ſay of any man, who ſhould take an oath that was known to be falſe by the magiſtrate who adminiſtered it. Would not the tranſaction cover both the parties with infamy? And ſurely we ſhould not be leſs ſcrupulous in an affair of *religion*, from which oaths derive all their obligation, than we are in civil matters. Beſides, all ſtrangers, who know nothing about the perſons who receive ſubſcription, will naturally conclude that the man who ſolemnly ſubſcribes to any thing, really *believes it*, and will never imagine that he thought to impoſe upon the world, and himſelf too.

Laſtly, there are many who ſubſcribe the articles as a mere form of admiſſion into an office; thinking that they thereby only engage to do certain things, and recite certain forms of words, which the legiſlature requires, for a certain ſalary; but that their *belief* of what they are required to pronounce is not at all neceſſary. One of your clergymen has even ſaid in print that when he is in the deſk, he only ſays what the law appoints him to ſay, and pays him for ſaying, but that in the pulpit he ſpeaks for himſelf, and is anſwerable for the truth of what he delivers. But do you think that nothing more is required of your clergy than of a public cryer, or a town clerk, who muſt read whatever is put into his hands? Public criers are not required to *ſubſcribe* to the truth of every thing that in their office they recite aloud. On this principle, your clergy might juſt as well conform to the church of Rome, profeſs mahometaniſm, or do any thing elſe, for a ſufficient ſalary; and I fear that there are too many of them who would not ſcruple to do it; becauſe

what

what they would do then, would be no greater violation of their conſciences than what they do now. Common ſenſe will tell you that no man ought to ſubſcribe what he has not well *conſidered*, and what he does not firmly *believe*.

Inſtead of merely ſubſcribing their names to theſe articles, as the clergy now do, I wiſh the experiment was made of making them *declare upon their honour*, that they believe them, as they are required to do, *in the obvious, literal and grammatical ſenſe of the words*, and that they make this declaration as *the ſettled principle and conviction of their heart, as they hope for mercy from the God of truth*. This new mode would at leaſt make many of your clergy *think* a little more upon the ſubject than they appear to have done at preſent; and your teachers, though believing what I have clearly ſhewn to be exceedingly abſurd, and manifeſtly unſcriptural, would at leaſt be *honeſt*.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

Of Mr. Madan's Idea of Unitarianiſm.

My Friends and Neighbours,

YOU have heard a good deal of late about *Socinianiſm*, or *Unitarianiſm*, and ſome of you may not know much about the matter, except that you have been led to conceive that it is ſomething of a very alarming nature, ſomething offenſive to God, and highly dangerous with reſpect to its conſequences in another world. But Mr. Madan has advanced ſomething quite *new* on the ſubject; more than intimating that it is dangerous with reſpect to *the ſtate*, as much ſo as any thing in popery. "To juſtify this aſſertion, it is "neceſſary" he ſays, p. 9, "to remark that the principles "of the Socinian doctrine in this place are evidently gain-"ing ground among the Preſbyterians; and certainly thoſe "principles are not more conſiſtent with the doctrine of the "eſtabliſhed

"eſtabliſhed church, and no leſs dangerous to the ſtate, "than any of the tenets of popery."

As Mr. Madan does not tell you what this Socinianiſm, (which he deſcribes as ſo very dangerous both to church and ſtate) is, it is neceſſary that I give you ſome information on the ſubject, and then you will judge for yourſelves, how far it is dangerous. Now Socinians believe that Chriſt is not God equal to the Father, as your church maintains, but they ſay that he was a man inſpired of God, or a prophet; that he was ſent of God to teach men the true way to eternal life, and eſpecially to preach the doctrines of an univerſal reſurrection, and a future judgment; that in order to enable him to teach theſe great doctrines with effect, he was impowered by God to work many miracles; that he was crucified, died, and was buried; but that God raiſed him from the dead, and took him up into heaven; where he is to continue till, in God's appointed time, he will come again to raiſe all the dead, to judge the world, and to give unto every man according to his works.

This account of Socinianiſm, or more properly Unitarianiſm, is what I am ſure you perfectly underſtand, much better, I am well perſuaded, than you do your own church doctrine of *three perſons in one God*, and of one of theſe perſons becoming *incarnate*, in order, by his ſufferings and death, to ſatisfy the juſtice of another of theſe three perſons, for the ſins of men. I am ready to acknowledge that this Unitarian doctrine is very contrary to that of your church, more ſo, indeed, than any thing in the ſyſtem of popery. For with reſpect to every thing of this nature, the doctrines of your church are exactly thoſe of popery. They were thoſe that Luther and others had been educated in the belief of, and which, without any particular examination, they left as they found. But that ſuch a doctrine as I have deſcribed to you has any thing in it hoſtile to the *ſtate*, is what I have never heard before, except that whatever is hoſtile to the *church*, muſt, of courſe, be hoſtile to the *ſtate* alſo.

Popery, I believe to be a very innocent thing with reſpect to the ſtate at preſent, though it was not always ſo. Then, however,

however, the danger arose not from any *religious tenets* of the Catholics, but from their subjection to a foreign head, and to the family of the Stuarts, to which family the high church party also had a strong leaning. The danger also that some persons still apprehend from popery, is on the same account, viz. the political nature of their system. But surely there is nothing of a political nature in the Unitarian doctrine. What has the belief of one God, or of the humanity of Christ, to do with any principle of the English constitution? No doctrine in philosophy, or medicine, can have less connection with it.

On this business Mr. Madan should have explained himself, and not have asserted that the principles of Socinians are hostile to the state, without some *evidence*, something in the form or shape of an *argument*. It is in vain to reply to a man who advances nothing to reply to, and who only confidently *asserts* what we as confidently deny, treating it as a mere *calumny*. But according to Mr. Madan, Dissenters being enemies to the church, they must, of course, be enemies to the state too; and Unitarians being of all other Dissenters the farthest from the church, they must therefore be the greatest enemies to the state; whether it can be made to appear (for this is what Mr. Madan has not yet attempted) that their principles bear any aspect at all towards the state or not. Since, however, to my great regret, we are to hear no more from Mr. Madan, I shall proceed as well as I can without him, and in my next give an account of the grounds of our Unitarian faith, that you may judge for yourselves whether *reason* and the *scriptures* be on our side, or not. The question is certainly of importance, deserving your very serious consideration, and that of Mr. Madan too.

I am,
My good friends and neighbours,
Your very humble servant,
J. PRIESTLEY.

FAIR-HILL,
April 8, 1790.

Addition to Part III. *p.* 32.

What extravagant things the advocates for eſtabliſhments can ſay, we ſee in Mr. Madan's Note from *Wollaſton's Religion of Nature*, p. 25, "Were it not for that ſenſe of vir-"tue, which is principally preſerved, as far as it is preſerved, "by national forms and habits of religion, men would ſoon "loſe it all, run wild, prey upon one another, and do what "elſe the worſt of ſavages do."

This was written many years ago, when every country had an eſtabliſhed religion, and therefore *a ſenſe of public virtue* might, with ſome plauſiblity, be aſcribed to it. For ſince both exiſted together, one of them might appear to be the *cauſe* of the other. But Mr. Madan has ſeen more, and he ought to have reflected on what he has ſeen. He might ſee that in America men do not loſe all ſenſe of religion, and public virtue, by loſing an eſtabliſhment. The people of that country do not *run wild*, *prey upon one another*, and *act like the worſt of ſavages*. Mr. Wollaſton could not ſee much of this. At leaſt he might ſay, that, though there was no proper eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in America, yet *that* the people of that country were more or leſs controlled by *this*, in which there is an eſtabliſhment of religion. But Mr. Madan might have ſeen America independent of England, and though without an eſtabliſhment, as virtuous as this; but he has turned his eyes another way.

A man may as well ſay that the riſing of the ſun, or the falling of the rain, is owing to eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, as that a general ſenſe of religion, and virtue in a country depends upon them. They are, I doubt not, great obſtructions to true religion, and the cauſe of much of the *infidelity* of the Great at the preſent day. What is moſt *conſpicuous* in religion, is of courſe that which is *eſtabliſhed*, and what is eſtabliſhed they ſee to be *abſurd*, and therefore they make no farther inquiry about it. They conform to it in public, but laugh at it in private. For the ſake therefore of religion, and public virtue, I wiſh to ſee an end of theſe corrupt eſtabliſhments; and I ſhall not fail to do the little that may be in my power towards accompliſhing this great and moſt deſirable end.